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DO IT IN THE DARK
WHAT TO DO WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
Issue 322 AUGUST 2004

DRAGON
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Publisher: **Lisa Stevens**
Editor-in-Chief: **Matthew Sernett**
Art Director: **Sean Glenn**
Assistant Editors: **Mike McArtor and F. Wesley Schneider**
Graphic Design: **Sarah Robinson and Mike Schley**
Advertising Director: **Rob Stewart**
Director of Prod. & Manufacturing: **Matt Beals**
Prepress Manager: **Kelly O'Brien**
Circulation Manager: **Keith Strohm**

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
Peter Bergting, Brom, David Day, Tom Fowler, Niklas Janssen, John Kovalic, Robert Lazzaretti, Howard Lyon, Mike Mayhew, Tony Mosley, James Ryman, Marc Sasso, Aaron Williams, Ashley Wood

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS
Richard Baker, Monte Cook, Thomas M. Costa, Jonathan Drain, Richard Farrese, Ed Greenwood, Clifford Horowitz, Phillip Larwood, Paul Leach, Michael Mearls, Jacob Steinman, Mark Tassin, Nicholas J. Thalasinos, Skip Williams

PAIZO PUBLISHING, LLC
3245 146th Place SE, Suite 110
Bellevue, WA 98007
Chief Executive Officer
Lisa Stevens
Vice President
Keith Strohm
Technical Director
Vic Wertz
Operations Manager
Jeff Alvarez

Role-Aiking Included

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DRAGON #323

Dragon unleashed! Check out next issue to see how the new *Dragon* better serves you. Get the first look at new features to appear in every issue: "Spellcraft," "The Magic Shop," "First Watch," "Player Initiative," "Winning Races," "A Novel Approach," "Heroic Feats," "Players' Tips," "Adventurers' Tricks," "Coup de Grace," and more!

Samurai Vs. Knight
by John Clements
In a battle between a historical samurai and an authentic European knight, who would win?

See No Evil
by Michael Tresca
What if paladins couldn't detect evil? What if no one could? Check out the spells that give players new options in games that blur the line between black and white.

Sneak Preview: Demon Stone
by F. Wesley Schneider
See our exclusive interview with R. A. Salvatore and the designers of *Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone*, a new D&D game coming to the Playstation 2 and Xbox.

Seven Deadly Domains
by Hal Maclean
Greed, envy, gluttony, sloth, lust, pride, wrath—the seven deadly sins as cleric domains.

WYRM'S TURN

FROM THE EDITOR

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS DARKNESS

Like a lot of D&D players, I'm tinkering with an idea for a new campaign world. And like many new campaign worlds, my idea for a fantasy setting had its genesis in frustration with the settings available. It's not that I don't like the published settings. I'm a diehard Forgotten Realms fan, and I find Eberron intriguing. I also love the older settings like Spelljamer, Kara-Tur, Ravenloft, and Al-Qadim. The trouble I currently find myself having with all of these settings is two-fold: darkvision and monsters.

The monster problem is this: Most settings are largely settled and hold little room for all the monsters that make D&D so much fun. Thus, in the campaign I'm building, various monsters rule much of the world. There's a labyrinthine city-state controlled by minotaurs, a gloom-shrouded forest-nation that owes allegiance to dark nagas, a kingdom lorded over by a great wyrm blue dragon and an incestuous dynasty of half-dragon sorcerers, and so on. It might not be everyone's ideal adventuring grounds, but it sounds like a fun campaign to me.

The darkvision problem proves trickier. I like the idea of adventurers delving into dungeons with torches and lanterns held high. It's a little detail that provides a lot of the sense of adventure I like to have when running a game or playing in one. Yet in most games I've played in, darkness rarely affects play. Someone in the party has darkvision or casts a *light* spell, and everyone forgets that not every PC can see or that the light source has a limited range. Players remember their torches only when they need to set something on fire.

I could be more diligent about vision when I DM my campaign, but I'd rather not describe each dungeon room differently for the human with a candle, the elf with low-light vision, and the half-orc with darkvision. It becomes even more bothersome to worry about such things during combat when light sources are moving about and when all the players can see the map and miniatures. I could remove low-light vision and darkvision from the *Player's Handbook* races, but those benefits provide for play balance, and players expect them when they make characters of those races.

Instead, I plan to limit the PC races to those without darkvision or low-light vision, making other PC races rare, distant, or nonexistent. That leaves halflings, humans, and . . . well, not much. Of the creatures in the *Monster Manual*, only halflings, lizardfolk, and locathah lack some extraordinary ability to see in shadowy or dark conditions. I like the idea of lizardfolk PCs. Although lizardfolk have racial Hit Dice and a level adjustment, the players can use the monster class progression provided in "Children of Ka" from *Dragon* #318. Locathah won't work because they're aquatic, and I don't want to accommodate water-breathing PCs. That leaves me with three PC races.

The preponderance of see-in-the-dark monsters in D&D (and the lack of such creatures as PC races in my campaign) makes using the DM advice in this issue's "Who's Afraid of the Dark" easy to employ, but the lack of race options might discourage some players. I plan to solve that by letting them help design the campaign, a tactic inspired by this issue's "Collaborative Campaign Building."

Of course, I'm still a long way from having a whole setting in which to run games. To make my campaign world, I'll check out the campaign-creation advice soon to be published in *Dungeon* (in issue #114 and beyond), incorporate the ideas and feedback from potential players, steal liberally from published settings, borrow ideas from novels I've read and electronic games I've played, and then I'll put it all together—or not.

Like a lot of D&D players, I'm prone to creating new campaigns at the drop of a hat. My grim, dark-fantasy world where monsters rule massive city-states might not see the light of day, but it's fun to tinker with and a joy to talk about with others. Like compulsively making new PCs, creating new worlds for D&D games is a hobby within the hobby, providing yet another reason to love this game.

I'll certainly tinker more with my campaign idea, though. Of the campaign plans I've made, it's my favorite, and I . . . hang on—I hear a hat dropping.

Matthew Sernett
Editor-in-Chief

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FINISH YOUR BEERS. THE HIGH PRIESTESS HAS COMMISSIONED US TO BEAT ONE OF HER PALADINS UNCONSCIOUS —"FOR EXHIBITING BEHAVIOR UNBEFITTING A PALADIN," SHE SAID.
WHOA.

READERS TALK BACK

COLORFUL DRAGONS, UNLEASHING DRAGONS, AND DRAGON BIRTHDAYS

COLOR ME EVIL

I am a regular subscriber to *Dragon* and have been collecting as many of the 3rd edition and revised edition issues as I can. I received my *Dragon* #320 in the mailbox yesterday, and I was overjoyed and disappointed at the same time. I have been waiting with bated breath for dragons as PC progressions, and I was pleased with finally having the metallic dragon progressions. Yet where are the chromatics? I'd love to play a chromatic dragon attempting to come to terms with his nature. Can I expect to see these in a web enhancement or in a future issue? I kind of felt like you told only half the story in the article.

Michael Magnus Wilson
Address withheld

*Thanks for subscribing, Michael. If you need help collecting old issues, please check the back issues section of our website (**www.paizo.com/ backissues**) for the issues you're missing.*

*As you can tell from the article, writing up all the chromatic dragons in addition to the metallic dragons would have occupied a large portion of the magazine. Thus, we chose to focus on the good dragons, as it seemed that more DMs would allow a good dragon to adventure in their campaigns. Assistant Editor Mike McArtor did a fantastic job with the article you mentioned, and he might be enticed to write up the chromatic dragons as well; we're just waiting to see if there's enough interest. If you'd like to see the chromatic dragons in monster class format, send an email to **scalemail@paizo.com**.*

UNLEASHED?

Okay, spill it! What the heck do you mean when you say *Dragon* is going to be "unleashed?" If you care about my opinion, please remove the fiction. Instead, please put in more "Dungeoncraft," "The Play's the Thing," "Elminster's Guide to the Realms," "Silicon Sorcery," and just more fluff and crunch. Also, can you put in classes for the evil dragons like you did with the good ones in issue #320? Keep up the good work.

Btaysom
Address withheld

Next issue, you'll see a few changes to Dragon. *If you check out* Dungeon *#114, you'll see some changes there as well. The first thing you'll probably notice is that the logos have changed to be more readable and newsstand-friendly. We're also giving* Dragon *a new interior design. You'll see some new columns and new names for old columns. Some DM-only articles are moving to* Dungeon, *whereas* Dragon *will offer more utility to players than it has before.* Dragon *is still going to be a DM's go-to source for all kinds of D&D content, but every issue will be loaded with stuff every D&D player can use and enjoy. I don't have room to spill the beans about everything, but you can check out our new writers' guidelines at **www.paizo.com/dragon** for more hints about what you'll see in the next issue and those beyond.*

WELCOME WINDS OF CHANGE

In regards to Matthew Sernett's comments on the nature of gaming in "Wyrm's Turn," I must totally agree. My love of fantasy developed further with exposure to D&D, but it was there long before. Everything must at some point change or become stale and boring. I was very much against 3rd edition until, after much arm-twisting, I finally gave in and made a character. The revised edition again gave me pause, but I was a little more open-minded because I could see some of the problems with 3.0.

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The long-winded point I'm trying to make is that change attracts new people, new ideas, and generally creates growth all around. For those critics of *Dragon* who constantly complain about content—too much this, not enough that, and so on—look closely and you will see the variety that *Dragon* offers from month to month. So congrats to all on another excellent issue, and keep 'em coming!

Jason Rekker
Address withheld

DO YOU HAVE ANY REFERENCES?

After reading "Scale Mail" in issue #320, I find myself extremely annoyed at the person who wrote the "Not Playing Niche" letter. Tony assumes that articles have to be about things that occur frequently in a campaign to be useful. My DM (she also has a subscription to *Dragon*) ran an adventure using the pirate information from that issue, and it was one of the more memorable gaming sessions my group has had in a long time. Also, the compsognathus from that issue proved to be the perfect familiar for my wild elf sorcerer. He also states that the comics in that particular issue were excessive, but he fails to consider that six pages out of one hundred and eight is only about five percent of the issue—not to mention the fact that it was the April issue and therefore had many more comics than usual.

However, I have a complaint about issue #320: Namely, all the references to the *Draconomicon*. In "Fostered Dragons," there were two references to rules in the *Draconomicon* without reprinting the rules they referenced (convincing a wyrmling to allow itself to be fostered and convincing it to be a cohort), and I'm sure that there are some I missed. Now, while I normally don't have a problem with articles that are based on rules in a specific product, I still expect you to make sure that the articles you print are useful for those who don't own that product.

Overall, you do a wonderful job. I love the magazine, and the rest of the issue was a wonderful read.

Ben Casner
Address withheld

Sorry about that, Ben. We try to avoid referencing rules from books other than the three core rulebooks, but sometimes it's unavoidable. Reprinting those particular rules from the Draconomicon *would have taken up too much space in the magazine, but it seemed we would be remiss if we didn't mention that Wizards of the Coast has devised special rules for that interaction.*

NEVER STOP DREAMING

I don't think this is a typical letter to the editor. I want to know what jobs are available in the world of Dungeons & Dragons? I'm a typical 20-something who has no idea what he wants to do with the rest of his life. I've searched and searched, and the only thing I've found that never fails to bring me joy (and occupy most of my spare time) is D&D. I was just curious if there was any need to explore the roleplaying realm for a career, or am I just living in a dream?

Keith Vaughn
Address withheld

I'd say that folks in the industry are living the dream, but without a doubt, game production is an industry. There are hundreds if not thousands of different kinds of jobs that help D&D and other games come to light. Besides authors, editors, and artists, there are graphic designers, graphic artists, sculptors, sales directors, brand managers, marketing directors, public relations managers, distributors, ad sales reps, web directors, technical support, customer support—the list goes on and on.

The key to attaining a job in the game industry is using the same strategy you would to get a job in any other industry. Know your interests, know your skills, gain the education you need, get the right experience, have a good attitude, and keep plugging away at it until you prevail. The important thing is to have a goal. Think about what position in the industry suits your skills and interests. If you don't have the right skills or experience for the job you want, make getting those skills or that experience your goal.

If you're interested in writing Dungeons & Dragons products, there's

ZOGONIA
DOMATO, I WANT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT OUR LAST ASSIGNMENT! BEATING UP A PALADIN WAS NO FUN AT ALL! IT WAS HORRIBLE! PALADINS ARE NICE, NICE PEOPLE!
YOU WERE WRONG TO TAKE THAT JOB, AND I EXPECT YOU TO BE SMART! IF YOU EVER SIGN-US-UP FOR SUCH A HORRIBLE, MEAN JOB AGAIN, I'LL CHALLENGE YOU TO A BATTLE TO THE DEATH!!!
COULD I HAVE ACTUALLY SCREWED-UP??
Nah.
SLAM
DOMATO, THANKS!! THAT LAST JOB ROCKED! BEATING UP A PALADIN WAS A DREAM COME TRUE!!!
OH CRAP!

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no better way to get your foot in the door than writing for DRAGON *or* DUNGEON. *Just ask Frank Brunner or Steve Schubert; you'll see products from Wizards of the Coast with their names on them sometime soon. Authors who consistently do good work for the magazines attract interest from Wizards of the Coast, and we sometimes recommend authors when they're looking for freelancers. If you want to write for the magazines, check out the magazine's writers' guidelines at* ***www.paizo.com/dragon*** *and* ***www.paizo.com/dungeon.*** *Good luck!*

POSTER CHILD FOR D&D

The 30th anniversary issue was great! The article that presented dragons as PCs without level adjustments is great material for DMs who want to run a COUNCIL OF WYRMS campaign. Also, the short story set in FORGOTTEN REALMS by Richard Lee Byers was enjoyable. However, the real reason I'm writing you folks is the *wonderful* two-page artwork by Todd Lockwood. I've got to have it as a poster for my game room! Is there any chance of that happening?

Dean Siemsen
Address withheld

It's funny you should ask that. Wizards of the Coast is reproducing the image as high-end art prints to give away at the Epic Level D&D Party celebrating the 30th anniversary of D&D at Gen Con. Of course, Gen Con is this month, so if you haven't made travel plans already, your best bet might be eBay.

MONSTER MASH

There's an Oriental campaign setting, a Mesoamerican campaign setting (MAZTICA), a plane-traveling campaign setting (PLANESCAPE), and even an undead PC campaign setting (GHOSTWALK). So why hasn't anyone bothered to create a setting where ogres can run banks and minotaurs can run for president? All *Savage Species* has are a few lame suggestions on how monsters might fit into a campaign. I have been looking for ages for a setting where, by law, medusas must wear special masks, where minotaurs get their horns trimmed for security concerns, and where giants need special accommodations and can only go into buildings that are "giant accessible." Instead, work gets started on a brand new setting that, although interesting, does nothing groundbreaking. EBERRON might combine things from other worlds, but it doesn't really have a new feature (like GHOSTWALK's play-while-dead feature). Why couldn't Wizards of the Coast start work on the setting I expected to see in *Savage Species?*

Isaac Brooks
Address withheld

Because yuan-ti would rule the world, and then it would be a pretty boring place.

More seriously, I wouldn't say that EBERRON does nothing groundbreaking or doesn't have new features. In fact, it has five monster nations: the goblinoid-ruled land of Darguun, the orc-inhabited Shadow Marches, the lizardfolk lands of Q'barra, the rakshasa- and night hag-haunted Demon Wastes, and the country of Droaam, which is ruled by hags and inhabited by all manner of monsters. Also, EBERRON plays a lot looser with alignments than any other setting (such as good chromatic dragons and evil metallic ones), and even human cities are home to some goblinoids and orcs.

I wasn't entirely kidding about the yuan-ti, though. Check out the mental stats for half-bloods and abominations. Remember that those stats are for average *yuan-ti!*

Cloud Kingdom Games

This issue's Riddle:

A gentle bend arching back,
To a single braid
Who'd expect this graceful maid
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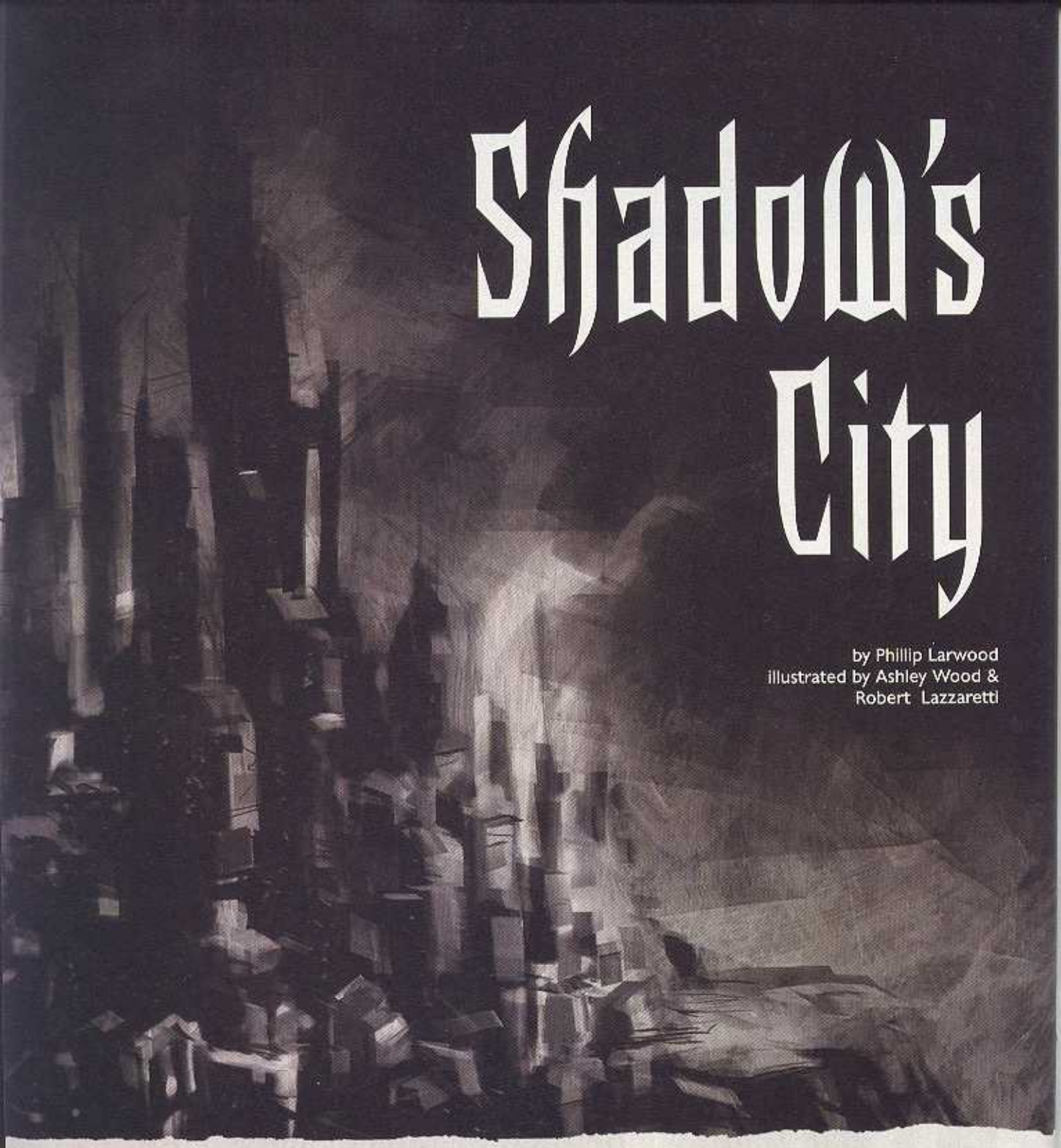


Shadow's City

by Phillip Larwood
illustrated by Ashley Wood &
Robert Lazzaretti

Balefire, City of Lanterns

On the edge of a vast canyon rises a city of black stone and towering spires, piercing the suffocating gloom of the Plane of Shadow with a thousand pinpricks of multicolored light. This is Balefire, the City of Lanterns.

While most cities on the Plane of Shadow are twisted reflections of cities on the Material Plane, Balefire stands out like a beacon against the endless shadows, attracting countless travelers seeking solitude, respite, or adventure. Hundreds of tiny flames light Balefire's streets, and its buildings glow with the radiance of thousands of decorative lanterns, all carefully maintained by the city's famous lanterneers. Despite the solid stone from which it is built, the city's position on the edge of Nightcrawler Canyon seems precarious, especially when the landscape shifts and slithering sounds arise from the canyon's impossibly dark depths.

BALEFIRE, THE CITY OF LANTERNS

Balefire is one of the few cities the Plane of Shadow can exclusively call its own.

Balefire (Large Town): Nonstandard; AL N; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 63,000 gp; Population 4,277; Integrated (human 40%, drow 30%, shadar-kai* 15%, mind flayer 7%, dark one* 4%, duergar 2%, other 2%). (*These creatures can be found in the *Fiend Folio*.)

Authority Figures: Xurothil (NE male drow lich wizard 18), Supreme Overseer of Balefire; Vargild Kortath (LN male human fighter 12), Commander of the City Watch; Zaleid (LE male tiefling wizard 13), Grand Master of the Shadowcrafters.

Important Figures: Milluefar (LE male drow wizard 11), Xurothil's apprentice; Sadrinal Thillonithar (CG female elf rogue 12), owner of Sadrinal's Fineries; Rhinashai (N female shadar-kai ranger 8), head of the beacon moth breeders; Nemeth Zorlinn (NG male human wizard 7), part owner of the Purple Lantern Tavern; Albara Stormhammer (LN female dwarf fighter 6), part owner of the Purple Lantern Tavern; Hulkurn (CE male human rogue 4/sorcerer 4), owner of the Emerald Kiss; Snurrak (N male lizardfolk fighter 3), famous lanterneer.

HISTORY

Thousands of years ago, a terrible war destroyed the drow city of Xanathalon. While most of the drow were killed, a young drow shadowdancer named Acora-Shiin escaped. Acora-Shiin fled to the Plane of Shadow with a small contingent of followers and apprentices and founded a college there to teach others what he knew. Over the years, the college grew in size, and other buildings were built around it to cater to the students living within. Lajandra, a gnome artisan and wizard of some skill, owned one of these early buildings and from it sold a variety of magic and mundane lanterns. Lajandra's lanterns soon became famous throughout the Plane of Shadow, and several shadowdancers were drawn to take up the craft. Lajandra took several apprentices, each eventually earning the title of lanterneer.

Hundreds of years passed and the growing town became known as Balefire. Lajandra's legacy was evident in the thousands of magic lanterns that lit the town's streets. Unfortunately, the light generated by the city awakened the nightcrawlers in the nearby canyon, and as one they descended on Balefire like a wave of darkness. Acora-Shiin and countless others died in the resulting battle, but a powerful drow wizard named Xurothil saved the city.

In the aftermath, Xurothil appointed himself Balefire's ruler and reconstructed the ruined college as a haven for spellcasters wanting to study the Plane of Shadow, renaming it Shadowcrafters Hall. Meanwhile, to better guard the city they defended, the Lanterneers built the Citadel of Lanterns, a towering spire, half fortress and half craftsman's hall. From their new seat of influence, the Lanterneers set about relighting the city.

Along with surprising growth, this period of the city's reconstruction saw the first appearance of Balefire's signature mounts, beacon moths, created by a talented young wizard named Milluefar. Upon introducing the creatures to the city, he gained considerable fame and a place as Xurothil's apprentice, a position likely to hold rule of Balefire in its future if he outlives his seemingly ageless master.

In the century since its near destruction, hordes of nightcrawlers and undead from Nightcrawler Canyon have attacked Balefire again and again. Although damaged buildings are continually rebuilt, the psyches of the city's residents have been scarred.

CITY LANDSCAPE

Balefire is laid out in a haphazard pattern, its tall buildings decorated with flowing cornices, ornate pillars, and monstrous statues resembling denizens of the Plane of Shadow. The most intimidating of these grim towers is unquestionably Shadowcrafters Hall, a blot of darkness amid the glowing lights of the city. From this edifice of stone and adamantine the bulk of the city's considerable magic trade takes place, and the Shadowcrafters (wizards and sorcerers specializing in darkness- and shadow-related spells) create the wondrous and unique magic items for which the city is famous. Near Shadowcrafters Hall, the tower of Xurothil the Overseer overlooks the city. This slender structure rises like a twisting serpent from the ground, lit by eerie, circling orbs of blue flame. Within the tower, Xurothil safeguards the city against dangers from the Plane of Shadow and beyond, all the while performing his own mysterious research.

The Citadel of Lanterns is an elegant building of stained glass and shadowstuff on the opposite side of the city from Shadowcrafters Hall. From here, the Lanterneers toil with a passion few can understand, building lanterns of every size, shape, and color as they optimistically try to stave off the encroaching darkness. They are also responsible for creating numerous kinds of magic lanterns, including *Lajandra's lanterns*.

Not far from the center of Balefire stands the Purple Lantern Tavern, a tall building with an arched roof of violet slate and large amethyst windows. Dozens of giant mauve lanterns constantly illuminate what most consider the best inn in the city. Managed by a group of former adventurers, it is no surprise that the Purple Lantern is a popular watering hole for travelers from across the planes.

Balefire's moth trainers rear and train the city's beacon moths from a squat building on the edge of Nightcrawler Canyon. The moth breeders and trainers are extremely skilled at their trades, and their moths are in constant demand by both citizens and members of the City Watch. Across from this building is the Gloomwood, a dense woodland where the caterpillar forms of the beacon moths feed and grow before weaving their cocoons.

In the heart of the city, Sadrinal's Fineries stands out as a refuge of culture and high fashion. Owned by Sadrinal Thillonithar, a sassy female elf, the shop sells the finest clothing and rumors money can buy. Another establishment with a fine name, but a shady reputation, is the Emerald Kiss. Here, sinister customers can hire mercenaries, other less reputable services, and all manner of juicy information. An obese sorcerer named Hulkurn owns the Emerald Kiss, and his smell is legendary.

CITY LIFE

The almost claustrophobic gloom that permeates the Plane of Shadow is the most prominent feature of life in Balefire. Even with the presence of so many lanterns, the shadows in Balefire are longer than they should be and seem to writhe away from the light. In general, visitors and residents cluster in the light provided by the city's countless magic lanterns or carry their own light sources. Natives of the plane and visitors from similarly dark places tend to cling to the ominous shadows instead.

Nightcrawler Canyon presents another grim facet of life in Balefire Unlike the shadows of the plane, the canyon presents a very tangible threat to the safety of the city, one that every resident is aware of. At least twice a year, a nightcrawler or two rises from the canyon with a horde of undead to menace the city. Normally the undead are kept at bay by the lanterns, but sometimes they attack, and the City Watch, Lanterneers, and Shadowcrafters join forces to destroy them.

Residents of Balefire are a fatalistic lot, but they have a strong sense of community despite their differences. The nervous edge the residents have is released in impromptu celebrations every time a nightcrawler attack is averted. It is a custom among many in the city to place bets predicting attacks, and coins are clandestinely exchanged during the parties that follow a nightcrawler's destruction. The City Watch frowns on such betting, but this does not stop it from happening.

When not celebrating, the residents of Balefire quietly go about their lives. This normally involves catering to the needs of travelers passing through the city and scholars studying the mysteries of the Plane of Shadow, both using the city as a relatively safe beachhead for further exploits.

Balefire has gained a reputation as a place where magic can be bought and sold at bargain prices, a quality that attracts a sizable number of black marketers dealing in the arcane arts. Of course, even these secretive dealers have to do business with the Shadowcrafters, who monopolize the creation of most magic items in the city.

LAJANDRA'S LANTERN

One of the first magic lanterns created by Lajandra, and thereafter copied by her apprentices, *Lajandra's lantern* is a box-shaped iron lantern of unassuming appearance. The lantern can be used and fueled like a normal lantern, but it can also burn magic potions, oils, elixirs, or ointments. When such items are poured into the lantern, and it is lit, the magic liquids are immediately destroyed but the lantern's flame produces a glow like that created by the *daylight* spell. In addition to the normal effect of the spell, incorporeal creatures must make a DC 15 Will save to enter an area illuminated by this light. Those incorporeal creatures that succeed may move through the light's radius, but suffer a -4 penalty on attacks, saves, and checks while in the area. Light from a *Lajandra's lantern* has a 60-foot-radius (30-foot-radius on the Plane of Shadow). Its light and magic is blocked by any substance or structure that blocks normal light, and its magic and light last for a number of hours equal to the gold-piece value of the magic liquid fueling it. As such, a *potion of cure light wounds* used to light a *Lajandra's lantern* keeps it lit for 50 hours, while a full jar of *Keoghtom's ointment* provides fuel for 4,000 hours. A *Lajandra's lantern* can be blown out as a normal lantern, requiring it to be refueled and relit before it again produces its magic effects. While it is unlit, the lantern does not burn fuel, either mundane or magical.

Faint Abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *magic circle against evil*; Price 9,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

VISITORS AND CITIZENS

Before visitors can enter Balefire, the City Watch employs various means of magical detection to determine a creature's race, gender, and alignment. As a rule, fiends, destructive monsters,

and most undead are banned from entering the city. Exceptions are rare but have been made from time to time, either at the request of some powerful city authority or when it seems more harm will come from trying to deny the visitor entrance than from merely allowing it in.

When visitors are allowed entry, they are given an *arcane mark*, a magical tattoo that glows with bright blue light. It is an offense to remove the mark and any attempt to deface or erase one, such as with an *erase* spell, results in immediate banishment from the city if caught. While it might be possible to remove the *arcane mark* and move around the city magically disguised or by using other means, the watch is surprisingly canny in detecting such offences.

After spending a year in the city, anyone wanting to become a citizen must travel to Xurothil's tower and sign the Book of Census. Common lore holds that the book possesses extremely powerful magic. Citizens do not speak openly about their time in the tower or about the book, but a few petitioning to become citizens never return from the tower or swiftly leave the city after their experience. Upon becoming permanent residents of the town, new citizens may join the ranks of the Shadowcrafters or Lanterneers.

Guilds and Factions

The Shadowcrafters are the richest and most influential group in Balefire. From within Shadowcrafter's Hall, they direct the research and construction of a wide variety of magic items and spells dealing with shadows and darkness. The Shadowcrafters require that all members be citizens and prove their talent for constructing magic items. Although joining the guild is not cheap, members gain access to the hall's vast laboratories, libraries, and many powerful allies.

While the Shadowcrafters have the most powerful guild in the city, the Lanterneers are surely the most beloved. There are two divisions of Lanterneers, lantern makers and lantern lighters. Joining the Lanterneers is not as difficult as joining the Shadowcrafters and only requires members to be citizens and pay a small yearly fee. This is more than made up for by the pay members of the guild receive patrolling the city and keeping its thousands of lanterns lit.

The City Watch is also a prominent group within Balefire. These dedicated men and women answer directly to Vargild, a retired bounty hunter. The City Watch upholds the law but has little control over either the Shadowcrafters or the Lanterneers. A typical patrol of watch members has six competent warriors and spellcasters, usually mounted on beacon moths.

Secret Societies

Two mysterious groups, the Nightshade Covenant and the Obsidian Dancers, constantly vie for power within Balefire.

The Nightshade Covenant is a group of drow and shadar-kai allied with the undead of Nightcrawler Canyon. According to rumors, the covenant wants to reduce Balefire to rubble and extinguish its cursed lanterns, wiping its stain of light from the Plane of Shadow's perfect darkness. Whatever the truth, the covenant is outlawed, and Xurothil himself magically interrogates suspected members before they are disposed of.

The Obsidian Dancers are not outlawed, but several members have been banished from Balefire for various misdeeds. This brotherhood of assassins and shadowdancers holds a centuries-old grudge against the Shadowcrafters and oppose their work at every turn. Disguised as entertainers, the Obsidian Dancers are rumored to be gathering allies from beyond the city's walls, preparing to drive the residents of Shadowcrafter's Hall from the city.

NEW MONSTER

First seen in Balefire more than a century ago, beacon moths have become one of the city's most unique and recognizable features.

Beacon Moth

Huge Magical Beast Hit Dice: 8d10+16 (60 hp)
Initiative: +4
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft., fly 90 ft. (average)
AC: 17 (-2 size, +4 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+19
Attack: Bite +9 melee (1d6+4)
Full Attack: Bite +9 melee (1d6+4)
Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Dazzling wings
Special Qualities: Blindsense 60 ft., cold resistance 10, darkvision 120 ft., daylight aura, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +3
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 16
Skills: Climb +14, Listen +9, Spot +9
Feats: Dodge, Flyby Attack, Hover
Environment: Plane of Shadow or any underground
Organization: Solitary, wing (2-6), or squadron (7-12)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 9-16 (Huge), 17-24 (Gargantuan)

Crawling from the shadows is a massive moth with a dull green abdomen and pale gray-green wings. As you watch, the moth takes flight, and its wings and abdomen begin to glow with a brilliant white-green light.

Beacon moths are magical creatures bred from a variety of tiny moths by Balefire's beacon moth breeders, although some escaped moths can be found in the wilds of the Plane of Shadow and on the Material Plane. First created by the wizard Milluefar, the drow's experiments gave the moths their great size and transformed them into mounts favored by Balefire's citizenry and watch.

The average beacon moth is almost 15 feet long and has a wingspan of 50 feet. Like most moths, a large pair of furry antennae juts from their foreheads, granting them considerable perception.

Beacon moths are normally passive, peaceful creatures, and they can easily be trained to carry a rider. They feed principally on carrion, but can eat almost any organic matter including wood, gnawing away at the material with their powerful jaws.

Combat

While a beacon moth without a rider normally flees from battle, cornered specimens attack with their powerful mandibles. Those with a rider can be trained to fight in battle like any other mount. A beacon moth only uses its dazzling wings power if seriously outnumbered, ordered to by a rider, or if it has been gravely injured.

Dazzling Wings (Su): Once per hour, as a standard action, a flying beacon moth can rapidly beat its wings, producing a 30-foot-long cone of light. Creatures within the cone must make a DC 17 Reflex save or be dazed for 1d4 rounds.

Creatures who make the save are not dazed and are instead dazzled until the beacon moth's next turn. The save DC for this effect is Charisma based.

Daylight Aura (Su): As soon as a beacon moth takes flight, it generates a powerful glow that mimics the effect of a *daylight* spell.

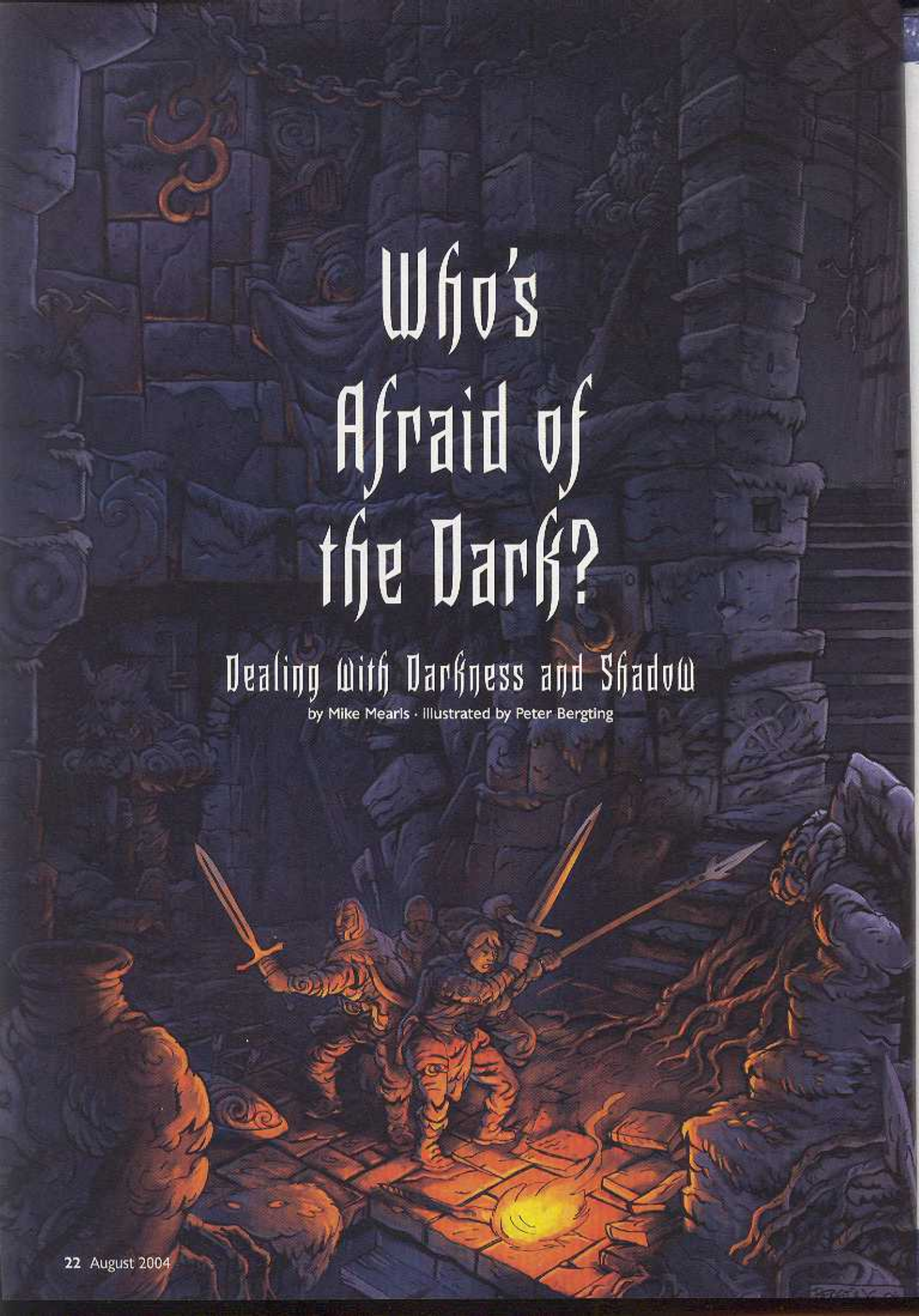
Skills: A beacon moth gains a +4 racial bonus on all Listen and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks. Beacon moths can take 10 on Climb checks, even if threatened or distracted.

Training a Beacon Moth

Beacon moths require training before they can bear riders in combat. Training requires six weeks of work and a DC 20 Handle Animal check. Riding a beacon moth requires an exotic saddle. A beacon moth can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he or she succeeds on a Ride check.

Beacon moth eggs are worth 2,000 gp apiece on the open market, while young are worth 3,000 gp each. Professional trainers charge 3,000 gp to rear or train a beacon moth.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a beacon moth is up to 344 pounds, a medium load is 345-688 pounds, and a heavy load is 689-1032 pounds.



Who's Afraid of the Dark?

Dealing With Darkness and Shadow

by Mike Mearls · Illustrated by Peter Bergting

Now they will know why they are afraid of the dark. Now they learn why they fear the night.
—Thulsa Doom, *Conan the Barbarian*

Fear of the dark remains one of the most common phobias. The fear of what we cannot see drives us to seek light—or shelter—in the dark of night. In D&D, many creatures possess darkvision, blindsight, and other means of detecting prey in lightless environs, giving those who lack such senses even greater reason to fear the dark.

Adventurers routinely venture into shadowed areas beneath the earth, where those without darkvision must swallow their fears of the unseen. Many DMs simply note that one of the characters carries a torch or lantern and forget about the dark that surrounds the party, missing out on an opportunity to add tension to the game.

This article presents advice and ideas for bringing darkness to life in a game session. It breaks down the rules for illumination and provides you with ideas for monsters, tricks, and traps that take advantage of them. It also presents ideas for how you can run an adventure in the dark so that it has a real affect on how the players approach problems and coordinate their actions.

FUMBLING IN DARKNESS

Venturing into a darkened area offers a combination of rules and practical barriers that the characters—and their foes—must overcome. This section goes over the rules for vision and light presented on page 164 of the *Player's Handbook* and provides a few more details.

There are three types of illumination: bright, shadowy, and darkness.

Areas of bright illumination offer enough light for characters to act normally. A torch casts light on an area that might not equal the sun in intensity, but the characters can see everything in the area.

In areas of shadowy illumination, creatures have concealment and they can make Hide checks to escape notice. A feeble light barely reveals objects, making it difficult to see anything in the haze of shadow.

Darkened areas render most creatures effectively blind. They suffer a 50% miss chance on all attacks, lose their Dexterity bonuses to AC, take a -2 penalty to AC, and suffer a -4 penalty on Search checks and most Strength- and Dexterity-based skill checks. Such a character loses the ability to deal extra damage due to precision (such as a ranger's favored enemy ability or a rogue's sneak attack), can only move at half speed, and cannot use gaze attacks. On the other hand, gaze attacks cannot affect characters blinded by darkness.

Characters cannot target opponents they cannot see. Ranged attacks become nearly impossible: Pinpointing a creature's square requires a Listen check to beat the distant character's Move Silently DC by 20. Characters attempting melee attacks have it only marginally better. They must fumble about for a target in the dark, making a touch attack into two adjacent squares using a standard action. Even if the character guesses a square with an opponent in it, the character still has a 50% chance of not touching the opponent. A character in the dark struck by an adjacent foe pinpoints the location of that foe (until it moves). Finally, the scent ability pinpoints anyone within 5 feet of the creature with scent.

Casting spells in the dark is tricky business at best. A player can describe a general direction and distance she wants to place a spell. Trace a line of effect from the caster to the desired target spot. If this line intersects with a wall, column, or similar obstacle that would block it, the spell fails. Many spells require line of sight or the ability to target a specific creature or creatures; casting such a spell in the dark without a discernible target also causes the spell to fail.

PUTTING THE PARTY IN THE DARK

Before you can make greater use of darkened areas in your game, you might want to consider the variety of ways that you can plunge the characters into the dark. There are several ways you can rob the characters of their light sources or introduce areas where illumination fails to shine.

OPTIONAL RULES FOR THE DARK

To reflect the difficulties of operating in the dark, consider these optional rules.

Readying an Object: If a character must recover an item from a backpack or pouch, it takes a full-round action to ready it rather than a move action. Fumbling through pockets and bags in the dark is difficult at best, as a character must rely on touch and sound to find the item he seeks. A potion lying at the bottom of a pack might be obvious by torchlight but difficult to dig out in the dark.

Directing by Darkvision: Darkvision is useful in areas that lack illumination, but it is by no means a surefire solution. Just because one character has darkvision doesn't mean that the rest of the party can see. A dwarf or half-orc could lead the party through a darkened area, but there's a chance that a character could stumble or blunder into danger. A character with darkvision cannot pinpoint enemies for his blind friends unless they are adjacent to an enemy. He can tell them the general location of foes, but no verbal description in the dark is so perfect that it could narrow down a creature's specific location. Even with the aid of someone who can see, a character still suffers all the drawbacks of working in the dark.

Eliminating Light Sources: Smart monsters might use the sunder or disarm actions against a character's torch or lantern, especially if a wizard, sorcerer, or similar character with a poor attack bonus carries one. A splash of water can douse a torch or other exposed flame with a successful touch attack. Goblins and other humanoids might keep water buckets handy to extinguish torches and lanterns. Since many monsters have darkvision, they can fight as normal while the characters fumble about.

Mundane Light Sources: The easiest and most obvious way to introduce darkened areas is to take away the party's torches, lanterns, and other light sources. This method can prove heavy handed, but with the proper justification, it is effective against low-level parties. At higher levels, the characters probably have easy access

to *continual flame* and similar magic. If the characters use torches and lanterns, make sure they keep track of who is carrying them. Remember that a character cannot carry a heavy shield and something else in one hand at the same time, but he can gain full use of a light shield and carry a torch or lantern in the same hand.

Spells: If the characters use spells to light their way, their enemies could use *dispel magic* to remove them. Cunning foes could sunder or disarm such items, then pounce upon the dropped light sources and hide them in bags or throw them far away from a battle. In this case, the monsters can still plunge the area into darkness and save their spells for martial purposes.

One thing to keep in mind about this tactic, and the ideas given for dousing torches and lanterns, is that they are best used as an occasional surprise or a featured strategy by a specific group of clever foes. If every monster the party faces lashes out at light sources, combats in darkness quickly become old, tired, and boring. D&D is about adventure and excitement, not stocking up on dozens of torches.

Magical Effects: In some dungeons or wilderness regions, there might be supernatural forces that cloak an area in darkness. These places could resist mundane and magical means to pierce their gloom, making them a surefire way to plunge the characters into the dark. Be careful about using such areas too often, though. They utterly overwhelm the party's ability to make light, even with spells, and might frustrate the players if you make liberal use of them.

Darkvision: You might be tempted to use magic or some other explanation to nullify a character's darkvision but generally it's a bad idea to simply nullify a PC's special abilities. Not only do you make it difficult for monsters with darkvision to operate in the area, but the players might feel cheated. People choose characters based on abilities they want to use, and if you take those talents away, the game might be less fun for them. As mentioned above, a character with darkvision has no ability to confer perfect descriptions of the area to his allies. While a dwarf or half-orc easily navigates a dark cavern, the other races in the party might still trip over their own feet.

MONSTERS IN THE DARK

As a rule of thumb, any creature that can sense others without the need for light is a good choice for a darkened area. Usually, darkness has an equal effect on the characters and on their opponents. Both sides are rendered unable to see, and both suffer the same drawbacks. If the monsters you use have blindsight, darkvision, tremorsense, or similar abilities, only the characters suffer the drawbacks of lightless conditions. In addition, the Blind-Fight feat helps overcome the drawback presented by concealment. You can swap out one of a monster's feats for it, perhaps reflecting the elite training or traditions of a humanoid tribe or a creature's ability to adapt to a darkened environment.

Given that it is relatively easy to find monsters suited to darkened areas, the real key lies in pairing that advantage with special abilities and talents that make the most of it.

Burrowing: In the dark, a burrowing creature can easily confuse the party by digging through the earth, attacking, and burrowing back into the ground. The characters might never realize their enemy can burrow, and finding such a creature by touch might prove impossible. The characters might pinpoint its location, but on its next action, it can dive into the ground and appear somewhere else. Since many burrowing monsters have tremorsense, they often operate without penalty in the dark. Incorporeal creatures can also move in and out of walls and the ground at will, allowing them similar tactics.

Movement: Since the characters have to blunder in the dark, any creature that can move unhindered in darkness plays havoc with them. A drow fighter with Spring Attack can dart in, strike, and retreat, denying the characters the chance to locate him by touch. Since characters who can't see move at half speed, it's easy for monsters with darkvision to outpace them. Creatures that can fly or climb have a huge advantage, since they can outmaneuver the party or avoid coming into melee range. With the PCs unable to see, they can't make effective ranged attacks against such foes.

Ranged and Reach Attacks: If the monsters don't need to move close to the characters to attack them, they gain a tremendous advantage in darkened areas. With the PCs reduced to finding their targets by hearing or touch, an opponent who can keep away from them has a big edge. The characters can only slowly investigate an area, and they might waste plenty of actions finding their enemies instead of attacking them.

Sneak Attack: Characters in darkened areas lose their Dexterity bonus to AC, making them vulnerable to sneak attack damage. This is a lethal combination, especially with ranged attackers. A derro rogue could lurk near the party, taking aim from the cover of darkness. The party has little chance of finding the sniper, since they must blunder forward and hope to find him by hearing or touch. The derro could easily move a safe distance away, reload his weapon, and fire again for sneak attack damage. Pairing this ability with flight, burrowing, or other alternative movement modes is a deadly recipe.

> A character who falls into a darkened pit might spend hours seeking a secret door or similar exit, utterly oblivious to the rope ladder that hangs a few feet above her head.

TRAPS AND OBSTACLES

Forced to rely on their sense of touch and hearing, the characters might find even the simplest terrain too difficult to

navigate. The characters might mistake a low wall for an impenetrable barrier, as they can't see the gap above it. Pits and crevices become deadly threats in a dark area.

The characters might attempt to navigate an area by tapping ahead with a long pole or reaching into the darkness ahead of them. In this case, use your judgment to tell the characters what they discover. They can easily discover pits in this manner, but traps might not activate without a minimum weight placed on a pressure plate or tripwire.

Going Up: Creatures blinded by the dark suffer a -4 penalty on Search checks, which might mean that unless they spend a lot of time investigating a wall they might never find the handholds carved into it. People have a natural tendency to think of terrain in two dimensions, an inclination that darkness can magnify.

Falling Down: Pits are nasty in the dark, because not only can the characters blunder into them, but finding a deadfall and rescuing a PC trapped in one might be impossible in the dark. If a fall knocks a PC unconscious or otherwise unable to make noise, her friends might have trouble locating her. A pit trap that seals shut, such as a spring-loaded cover that snaps closed after it activates, could easily separate the characters. The PCs left in the dark might not have any chance of finding their lost comrade even if she stood no more than a few feet away when she fell in.

Traps: Without visual cues to aid them, the party might blunder into traps with little chance of finding and disarming them. A pathway leading to a gleaming silver idol is an obvious place for a trap, but if the characters can't see the idol, they might simply walk into the trap. By the same token, the party has no special reason to move toward a trap in a large, dark area. A will-o'-the-wisp, noises, and similar lures can draw them to dangerous spots. In a darkened area, the party's tendency might be to move toward any beacon or feature that gives them a point of reference.

Since traps that make attack rolls are machines designed to fire at a specific point, they shouldn't suffer penalties for darkness or concealment. A crossbow trap doesn't aim when it attacks a PC. Instead, it merely launches a bolt at the spot directly above its trigger point. A trap, like a monster with darkvision or blindsight, gains the benefits of darkness but none of its drawbacks. In addition, the characters might mistake a trap for a lurking opponent. They have little chance to tell a spring-fired spear from a javelin thrown by a gnoll.

Since traps that make attack rolls are machines designed to fire at a specific point, they shouldn't suffer penalties for darkness or concealment checks.

In general, all traps work better in areas of darkness. The characters have a harder time avoiding them, and their effects might lead the PCs to mistake them for attacking monsters. You can allow the characters a Listen check to determine that a mechanical or magical device discharged. If the trap has a strong visual component, such as a tube that launches a *fireball*, the characters can probably see the trap in the light its spell effect gives off. Try using quiet and difficult-to-notice spells and attacks to keep the players off-balance. Subtle magic, such as *slow* or *hold person* can produce more confusion and fear than a brute force spell such as *lightning bolt*. In the dark, the characters might not even realize that a paralyzed ally is still nearby. While their friend stands motionless and quiet, the characters panic and perhaps assume that something killed him or grabbed him and carried him away. In general, spells that incapacitate or otherwise hinder a character are more useful in darkness than damaging spells.

DARKNESS TRICKS

In practical terms, darkness adds several complications to the characters' efforts. They can't see obstacles and monsters they might otherwise easily avoid, such as pits, gelatinous cubes, stairs leading up or down, and similar features. A character who falls into a darkened pit might spend hours seeking a secret door or similar exit, utterly oblivious to the rope ladder that hangs a few feet above her head. Areas of darkness cut down the information the players have about their environment, increasing the tension in an adventure and turning simple encounters into daunting obstacles.

Touch and Hearing Puzzles: In an area of darkness, the party might have to use their other senses to solve a problem. For example, a wall might have a map of the entire dungeon carved into it. If the characters trace the outline, they might find some important clues. By the same token, you can use noises as clues. The characters might have to listen to hear sounds coming from nearby monsters, the rush of water that points to the river they need to follow in order to escape, and so on. Perhaps the darkened area has a sand or dirt floor. By touching the ground, the characters might be able to find areas where the packed dirt or sand reveals paths frequently used by creatures who move through the area. By following these trails, the characters can make their way.

The characters could also use a staff or pole to investigate an object. A staff sounds much different when it strikes stone than when it strikes wood or brick. You can allow the characters to make Listen checks to determine the basic characteristics of a wall in this manner. They could determine its relative thickness and the hardness of the material, but nothing more.

You can use touch and sound clues to help give the characters a sense of direction in a darkened area. With so few clues to go by, the players might follow anything that breaks up the monotony of the endless dark. In addition, you should consider the noises likely to echo through the area and the feel of any items in a darkened place. You need to describe the scene to the characters using those senses, so it pays

to think about them as you design an area. If you include plenty of rich textures and strange noises, a darkened area can be as interesting and memorable as any other richly detailed scene. The added detail also makes it more difficult for the players to seize on characteristics as important or critical. For example, if the characters stumble through a darkened area for a bit before coming across a strangely grooved section of floor, the players are much more likely to think that the grooves are an important feature. Since you haven't added any special details to the rest of the area, they could assume that you mean for them to investigate. As a rule of thumb, give an area of darkness the same detail in terms of textures and sounds that you would give to any other area of the dungeon. That way, the players can't read too much into your descriptions, and you don't have to worry about the game coming to a halt as you add layers of detail to an area.

Running in Circles: Without visual cues, the party can easily walk over the same area again and again or they could muddletheir image of how an area is laid out. Picture a donut-shaped chamber cloaked in darkness. The characters might wander around it for hours without realizing their mistake. Of course, a character with 5 ranks in Survival always knows which direction is north.

An area of darkness could also feature secret doors hidden on only one side. The party could move through a door into a darkened area but be unable to exit when they can't find the door through which they entered. They expect to find the door by touch, but since it is crafted to blend in with stone walls, they might not uncover it without good Search checks. A guide who doesn't want the characters to know the specifics of the area could use this trick to prevent them from retracing their path to the surface or to whatever secret place he brings them.

This method can prove fun, but if you abuse it, the players might grow bored. Wandering in the dark for hours is no one's idea of a fun game session. You can fast forward through parts of the party's journey, telling them they've walked for four hours without finding anything rather than dragging out the trip minute by minute. The players can merely mark down the time spent wandering and move on with the game unless they have a reason to worry about wasting time. If they do need to move quickly, they can make Search checks with a -4 penalty to discover landmarks and possible paths toward their destination.

Relocation: Teleporters, gates, and other items that move the party are more difficult to cope with in the dark. In essence, these hazards are traps that use *teleport* to send the characters on a one-way trip to another region of the dungeon or to an altogether different cave complex. This trick serves to send explorers off into unintended tangents. An evil wizard who wants to be left alone while he finishes his doomsday spell could sow his lair with teleporters hidden in darkness. While the heroes press ahead to defeat him, they have no idea that they have actually been sent to a maze hundreds of miles away from their foe's lair.

This trick can prove frustrating for the players, especially if they have no way to return to their starting point. The adventure becomes a journey to make it back home or escape from their prison. This can be fun if the place the characters are sent to is interesting to explore or has challenging encounters. If the PCs end up in a maze, they might become frustrated that they went from an interesting adventure to a dull side trek. Use this method to send the characters into an adventure, rather than as a detour from the fun parts of a game session. It might make sense that a wizard teleports his foes to a featureless cave that runs for hundreds of miles, but it makes for a dull game.

As a rule of thumb, give an area of darkness the same detail in terms of textures and sounds that you would give to any other area of the dungeon.

Running Areas of Darkness

Darkness is perhaps one of the most difficult conditions to present to the players in a challenging way. The paladin falls victim to a *hold person* spell in a darkened area, but the other players can see her miniature on the grid. They know where she is, making it difficult even for experienced gamers to play dumb and act surprised or nervous that their friend has suddenly gone silent.

In the dark, the characters can't see each other and have limited information about each other's location. To start with, you might try putting away the miniatures and combat grid. Keep track of the PCs using a piece of graph paper, or at least keep the battlemat hidden from the PCs. You can describe the direction and rough distance of any sounds they hear, but the lack of a visual aid plays up the hindrance offered by darkness.

If you can physically separate the players, you can really drive home the feeling of being trapped in the dark. The players can't consult with each other on decisions, and they have no idea what the rest of the party might be doing. Unfortunately, this method slows down the game and it might prove impractical. If you can pull it off, though, it injects a strong sense of paranoia and apprehension into the players. You can also use notes to communicate to the players what their characters hear and feel.

Turning down the lights in your gaming area also enforces the idea that the characters are in a dark, alien environment. Don't make it difficult to read character sheets or your notes, but the dim lighting adds a fun ambience to the session.

Ecology of the Dark Ones

Enigmas Wrapped in Shadows

by Paul Leach • illustrated by Peter Bergting

For our kind, there is nothing but the darkness.

—Dark Ones' Proverb

The mysterious and unpredictable dark ones lurk in the tenebrous tunnels and isolated recesses of the Underdark's vast night. Robbing and killing as they please, these strange humanoids embody the veiled dangers and deepest secrets of the underground world, preying on the unwary and shunning anything to do with the forsaken world of light. While monsters of unsurpassed evil and power are the stuff of the Underdark's all too real nightmare, the dark ones remain its forgotten highwaymen—and that's exactly what they want.

Few people know the origins of the secretive dark ones or why they appear to be split between two different races: dark creepers and dark stalkers. The diminutive dark creepers are hoofed and pale, while the lithe, almost ghostly dark stalkers look frighteningly akin to normal humans. The truth of their genesis and dual-species society is one of the endless night's best-kept secrets, a past that all but these enigmatic denizens of darkness have forgotten.

DARK ONES IN THE WORLD

Dark ones are found almost anywhere underground, but they are most often encountered near trade routes or lurking on the outskirts of wealthy settlements. Some of them live in cave warrens, catacombs, or sewers of the surface world, venturing into the land above on moonless nights. They maintain temporary lairs near their victims but have larger communities too secluded to be found by any but the most thorough explorers. The shadowy bandits do little to alter their natural surroundings, preferring to leave as little trace of their existence as possible.

Dark ones are subject to the Underdark's predators, but they use their stealth and special abilities to avoid most creatures. Purple worms, umber hulks, and xorns are more difficult to circumvent, since these monsters all hunt using tremorsense, leading dark ones to exercise extreme caution when in areas roamed by such creatures. Dark ones rarely antagonize communities of dangerous humanoids, out of fear of provoking retaliation, and every now and then, they make alliances with such races or local monsters. More commonly, dark ones support their communities by raiding caravans from distant lands and travelers passing through their territory.

THE LIFE OF THE DARK ONES

Dark creepers and dark stalkers are born in a similar manner as humans and grow to maturity within 15 years. Parents share the responsibility of rearing and teaching their children with the other adults of the tribe. The young play games that reinforce essential survival skills such as concealment and observation. Young dark ones learn to hate the lighted world and consider any who carry light with them to be enemies. Their elders teach them that other creatures that dwell in the Underdark and outsiders are sources of wealth, amusement, and danger. Dark ones consider the whole Underdark their home, and they spend their lives wandering, hiding,

and stealing. Dark creepers live to be about 50 years old, while dark stalkers sometimes surpass 75 years.

When a dark one dies, its body decomposes in a manner befitting this strange race. Unless eaten or otherwise prevented from normally decomposing, the body deteriorates at such a rate that it vanishes within a month. Patient observers can see thin wisps of shadowy smoke rising from a corpse, although this opportunity is rare, since dark ones try to recover their dead whenever they can. Many of the natural vaults that serve as their tombs have been used by countless generations. "Born of the dark, we return to the dark," is their simple prayer and hope.

PHYSIOLOGY

Dark stalkers and creepers share many common traits owing to their shared heritage. Their eyes are quite disturbing, appearing as sinister slits uniformly colored a dead shade of gray. While they do have irises and pupils, these features are well camouflaged, reminiscent of the sightless eyes of cavern-dwelling fish. Dark ones are not blind, but neither do they possess darkvision. They rely on elevated senses of smell and hearing to provide them with an unmatched ability to navigate in total darkness.

Their soft voices remain so, even when used in anger. Dark ones do not so much speak words as breathe them. When they speak their dark tongue it sounds like a series of punctuated sighs, and they rely on subtle changes in tone to convey meaning. Even when dark ones converse in other languages, their voices sound like wind currents lost in a tunnel.

Their hair ranges in color from stark white to an inky black, and their skin is cool to the touch. Dark ones tend to be light for their size and they move as if they have no more substance than shadows. They conceal themselves in cloaks, masks, turbans, and wraps, preferring garb that covers their faces.

PSYCHOLOGY

Darkness ultimately defines all aspects of dark one life, from the core beliefs of each individual to their society as a whole. They believe nothing lasts forever, except for the dark, and therefore little else really matters. This is not a morbid or depressing certainty to dark ones, but the basis for their freedom, which they value above all else. They see no reason to tie themselves to the demands of land, industry, or conquest; neither do they have much use for glory or honor. Dark ones believe city walls and ideals were created to provide false security; city walls only make it easier for an enemy to find you, and moralistic ideals can only convince you to die for no reason at all. Dark ones see the civilized races of the world as pathetically clinging to ruinous traditions of self-deception, greed, and hatred, and dark ones eagerly capitalize on these conceits to take what they need. They think of themselves as wary survivors, while others call them cowardly parasites.

While dark ones have a relaxed attitude about many things, they have an almost maniacal fear and hatred of light that goes beyond the physical pain it causes them. They revile the sun as a merciless entity that maliciously blinds them and renders their survival skills useless. Dark ones believe that earthly fire and light-shedding magic were weapons the sun bestowed upon the world to help the brutish surface dwellers hunt and destroy them. Because of this, they refuse to engage in any type of metallurgy and rely solely on theft for their metal weapons, tools, and jewelry. Dark ones loathe blacksmiths due to their connection to the sun's power, even though they crave forged wares.

Dark ones often refuse to openly communicate with other races as a result of their paranoia. They learn the languages of other races so they can use the knowledge to better understand and spy on their prey. Dark ones learn languages either by secret observation or through tribal tutors. To speak to an outsider is taboo and should only be done in cases of dire necessity. Communicating with outsiders is too close to sharing or accepting the ways of those who might destroy the tribe. Dark ones never teach their own language to outsiders.

DIET

Dark ones are omnivorous, but their Underdark habitat and fear of fire often limits their diet to edible fungi and insects. They have a limited tolerance of raw meat and fish but prefer them cooked if they have access to a steam vent or hot springs. Smoked meat and baked goods are often priority targets during raids.

INDUSTRY AND THE ARTS

Dark ones obtain most necessities by gathering what they need from nature or hapless humanoids, but they do craft some items for themselves. They excel in preparing dyes from fungi, algae, and strange minerals, which allows them to darken their garments to the color of deepest shadow. Other substances are used to cure monster hides, enabling dark ones to make leather armor, pouches, and belts. They sometimes weave their own tunics, pants, and cloaks, but they usually prefer to modify stolen items.

DARK ONES AND THE FIEND FOLIO

The dark ones first appeared in the original printing of the *Fiend Folio* in 1981. Along with other staples from that bestiary (such as the drow, githyanki, and slaad) they have appeared in dozens of adventures since their inception and have long been a favorite of DMs and players alike. Continuing the tradition, both dark creepers and dark stalkers appear again on pages 37-39 of the 2003 printing of the *Fiend Folio*.

Dark ones do not bake ceramic containers and instead chemically treat and seal fungal spore pods (typically the shape and size of large potatoes) to create the organic equivalents of ceramic flasks. While the podskins have a number of mundane uses, they are perfect for delivering dark ones' diverse arsenal of alchemical weapons.

A tribe of dark ones often has several apothecaries who create poisons from Underdark flora and harvest the poisons and secretions of such creatures as carrion crawlers, scorpions, and other vermin. The apothecaries also specialize in shadow essence poison (see page 39 of the *Fiend Folio*), which they make by mixing a few inert ingredients with drops of their own blood.

Dark one spellcasters use stolen masterwork weapons to fashion magic items such as *assassin's daggers*, *daggers of venom*, and seeking and wounding ammunition. They also enchant rings and wondrous items, especially *bracers of armor*, *cloaks of displacement*, and *rings of invisibility*. With the aid of the tribe's alchemists,

potions and oils are also frequently produced, usually *potions of cat's grace*, *potions of invisibility*, and *oils of darkness* for their hunters.

Dark ones do not use written words to record their history, religion, or culture; rather, they know who they are and what they have suffered, and that is enough. Like city walls and foolish bravery, written records are the fruits of vanity that can only help your enemies. They are a race without mythic heroes, and each generation slips silently into the peaceful shadows, continuing the exodus begun long ago. Their hushed chants and few poems are imbued with an inspired solemnity.

RELIGION

Dark ones do not worship specific gods as most other races do, and in fact find the concept abhorrent. Rather, they revere darkness as an abstract force, a destination after death, and a personal ideal. How legitimate this religion is remains a matter of much debate, but the fact that dark stalker clerics mysteriously receive spells and that all dark ones are inexorably claimed by shadows after death lends credence to their beliefs. Dark ones have few clerics and those that exist are almost always dark stalkers. These clerics most often have access to the Darkness (from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*), Luck, Trickery, and Underdark (from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*) domains.

Although no one can be sure, many sages speculate that dark ones' refusal to worship specific gods led them to their current state. They might once have been members of a culture that never came to trust deities, or they could be heretics who turned their back on their gods. Another theory suggests that the forebears of dark ones were offered protection by the god of the sun and, when they refused him, were forever cast from his sight, cursed with their aversion for light. Whatever their history and however it ties to their strange religion remains yet another of dark ones' countless mysteries.

SOCIETY

Dark stalkers have always been the leaders and caretakers of dark ones. There is no formality to their rule, and authority is usually shared between all of the community's stalkers. In a feat of governing unheard of in nearly all other societies, dark stalkers never flaunt their rule or lord their authority over dark creepers, showing an unaccustomed affection for and understanding of their underlings. While the dark creepers are not servile, they rarely disobey their leaders.

Dark ones have no real laws, but they do have strong taboos against harming other members of the tribe. Murder is almost as bad as teaching an outsider their secret tongue, and either offense is worthy of exile or death. Betraying the tribe's lair to enemies is unheard of. Stealing is not an issue in dark one society as they are not a particularly greedy people. Thefts can only lead to counter-thefts in a tribe of pickpockets.

KILLER CREATURE COMBOS

Dark ones tend not to ally with many races, but they find natural predators very useful. Supreme opportunists, they sometimes merely wait for passers-by to stumble in another monster's lair, or they purposely lead headstrong enemies into its maw. While their prey is busy handling another creature, they take advantage of the situation to pick pockets and make attacks of their own.

Dark Creepers and a Cloaker: A cloaker with two dark creeper minions can be a considerable threat. By positioning themselves at opposite sides of a cavern, the creatures can attempt to catch enemies between them. The cloaker primarily uses its nausea and stupor moan effects (keeping dark ones outside the 30-foot range of most of its subsonic attacks) so the creepers can easily make sneak attacks. Two dark creepers and a cloaker are an EL 7 encounter.

A Dark Creeper and Darkmantles: Dark ones often lurk near small clutches of darkmantles, eagerly aiding the camouflaged predators and looting the bodies of their prey. By waiting until the darkmantles have used either their darkness or constrict ability, the dark creepers can slink close to targets and make sneak attacks while their opponents are either unaware or grappled. One dark creeper and two darkmantles are an EL 4 encounter.

Dark Creepers and Shocker Lizards: Dark ones are adept at using unintelligent Underdark creatures in simple but elegant ambushes. While two creepers wait at the far edge of a lair of four shocker lizards, a third creeper, pursued by PCs, dashes through the lair and sets the lizards on alert. When the PCs enter the lair, ranged attacks from the dark creepers aggravate the lizards into attacking the nearest targets, probably the PCs. While the four shocker lizards deal 8d6 points of damage with their lethal shocks, dark ones make sneak attacks. Even if they are exposed to the lizards' electrical attacks, dark ones' evasion ability gives them better-than-average chances of surviving the attacks. Three dark creepers and four shocker lizards make an EL 8 encounter.

A Dark Stalker and Dark Creepers: Dark ones are most commonly found in small hunting or raiding parties consisting of several dark creepers and a single dark stalker leader. Usually, dark ones hide using their shadow cloak abilities and slip close to their prey under the cover of the dark stalker's *fog cloud*. Dark creepers then sneak attack targets and retreat, trying to confuse and separate their enemies while the dark stalker watches and waits. Although the dark stalker aids overwhelmed creepers, he seeks out and concentrates his sneak attacks and poisoning on the strongest-looking enemy. After such an initial attack, the entire band of dark ones retreat, only to repeat the tactic on their weakened opponents again and again. A dark stalker and five dark creepers make an EL 9 encounter.

A Dark Stalker and Dire Weasels: Many dark stalkers favor dire weasels as both pets and hunting partners. With the dire weasel's attach and blood drain abilities, their dark stalker masters often send the animals ahead of them in combat. Once the weasels have caused Constitution damage, the stalkers take advantage of their enemies' lower Fortitude saving throws, thus maximizing their poison attacks. A dark stalker and four dire weasels make an EL 7 encounter.

A Dark Stalker and Rasts: Although dangerous creatures to train, or even be near, dark stalkers greatly value the aid of rasts. A rast ally is extremely versatile, being able to drain an opponent's Constitution or paralyze it from afar, allowing the dark stalker to use its poison or sneak attack abilities at its leisure. Also, the alien nature and sheer savagery of a rast makes one a perfect distraction for a far more stealthy dark stalker. A dark stalker and one rast make an EL 6 encounter.

A Dark Stalker and Troglodytes: Dark stalkers have been known to follow troglodyte hunters and steal their prey. While a dark stalker hides and keeps its distance from the troglodytes, it attempts to make sneak attacks with its poisoned javelins against characters sickened by the troglodytes' stench and suffering a -2 on saving throws. Once either the troglodytes or their prey is weakened, the dark stalker attacks. A dark stalker and two troglodytes are an EL 5 encounter.

VS. PCS

Dark ones use cunning and efficient methods to defeat their opponents. They are ruthless but not sadistic; murder is only a means to an end and is not employed if the dark one can simply pick a pocket instead. Dark ones zealously kill those who invade their home caverns, though, and lightbearers provoke escalated violence under any circumstances.

Sneak Attacks and Sleight of Hand: Dark ones use ambushes against lone scouts and stragglers, but sometimes they attack small groups, especially if the group uses artificial light. A band of dark ones usually splits its attacks. One group

NEW ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Dark ones have a peerless understanding of the alchemical uses of fungi and vegetation native to the Underdark. Using the hundreds of strange and deadly plants that surround them, dark ones have created a wide variety of distinctive alchemical items. The majority of these items are splash weapons, the rules for which are on page 158 of the *Player's Handbook*.

BROWN MOLD OIL

Brown mold oil is ground brown mold neutralized by a compound of lime and algae. When exposed to air, the compound turns gummy and inert, allowing the brown mold to revive for 1 round to cause cold damage to any creature it touches. A flask or podskin of brown mold oil has a range increment of 10 feet and is used as a thrown splash weapon. A direct hit deals 2d6 points of nonlethal cold damage, while all creatures within 5 feet take 1d6 points of nonlethal cold damage from the splash. Brown mold oil may be created with a successful DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check.

Cost: 75 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

OIL OF NAUSEA

Odorous resins and slimes are used to create oil of nausea. Flasks and podskins of the oil have a range increment of 10 feet and are used as thrown splash weapon. Those directly struck by oil of nausea must make a successful DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds, while those within the 5-foot-splash radius must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. Oil of nausea may be created with a successful DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check.

Cost: 60 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

POISON-FRIEND POD

These fungal spore pods are chemically altered so that their otherwise harmless clouds cause creatures to be more susceptible to poison. A poison-friend pod is a thrown weapon with a range increment of 10 feet. Upon striking a creature or square, these fungi erupt in a 10-foot cloud of spores that disperses in 1 round. Anyone caught in the cloud must make a successful DC 15 Fortitude save or take a -4 penalty on all saving throws against poison made in the next 10 minutes. Poison-friend pods may be created with a successful DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check.

Cost: 50 gp; Weight: —.

SHADOW HAZE DUST

Shadow haze dust is a potent eye irritant that obscures its victims' vision with dark hazes. One bag or podskin has a range increment of 10 feet and fills a 10-foot-radius cloud with the dust. Those within the cloud must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer a -6 penalty on all Spot checks for 1 hour or until a gallon of water is used to flush the character's eyes. Shadow haze dust may be created with a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.

Cost: 30 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

SHADOW VEIL

Shadow veil is a black dust created from finely powdered crystals that grow only in the deepest reaches of the Underdark. When stored in bags or podskins, this dust can be thrown as a splash weapon with a range increment of 10 feet. Upon striking a creature or square, the dust erupts in a 10-foot-radius cloud. Although this cloud has no affect on living creatures, it reacts with all nonmagical fires no larger than a campfire within the area, snuffing them out. Torches, lanterns, candles, cooking fires and the like go out instantly, but magical fire (such as a *wall of fire* spell) is unaffected. Although its effect is swift, a shadow veil dissipates quickly, and extinguished fires can be relit on the round following its use. Shadow veil may be created with a successful DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check.

Cost: 40 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

SECRETS OF THE DARK ONES

Dark ones are inscrutable, mysterious creatures that keep their secrets with the same cold silence of the darkness they revere. Although sages, explorers, and those harassed by these Underdark brigands have long sought to unravel the dark ones' secrets, all methods of investigation, from the most potent magical inquiries to ingenious drow tortures, have revealed little. Over the decades, four enigmas have consistently perplexed those brave and foolish enough to pry into the secrets of the dark ones.

ORIGINATING IN SHADOWS

Many races know where they came from or how they came to be, and myths of racial creation are among the best known throughout the world. Such tales are not told of dark ones, however. Of how these creatures came to be, what events or beings affected that creation, and why they bitterly speak of the surface with knowledge akin to hateful memories, only dark ones know. This question is made all the more significant as dark stalkers appear so much like humans, perhaps too like them not to share a single heritage.

THE WORSHIP OF DARKNESS

Rather than worshipping a single deity, all dark ones hold reverence for the dark. To them, all shadows are one—dark slivers of an unfathomable whole that provides them with all they need. Although they keep the specifics of their worship a jealously guarded secret, it seems to serve them well. What force grants the dark ones their powers and claims them in its shadow clutch after they die remains a enigma—one that could challenge mortal understanding of divine power.

A SOCIETY OF SECRETS

All dark ones hide themselves, both in the shadows of their Underdark homes and behind concealing layers of clothing, masks, and other disguises. Constantly trying to hide their natural forms, dark ones consider revealing themselves to outsiders a deeply rooted cultural taboo. Although no one is sure, some who have studied this strange race believe that dark ones hide themselves out of shame for some ancient disgrace. However, the truth of why dark ones hide themselves, and to what end, remains another of their countless secrets.

TWO SPECIES, ONE RACE

Anyone who has encountered dark creepers and their secretive leaders, the dark stalkers, has noticed that the dark ones are in fact two distinct races. While dark creepers seem to be primitive sneaks, little more than cunning goblins, the dark stalkers are elegant and deadly, with the stealth and grace of living shadow. How these two radically different types of creatures have come to live together, and seemingly in such harmony, is perhaps the dark ones' greatest mystery.

Some sages suggest that, despite their lower standing, dark creepers are better adapted to life underground than dark stalkers. This has raised the theory that dark creepers are the result of natural changes affecting a new generation of dark stalkers. However, this possibility throws into question why some dark stalkers hold a respect for dark creeper elders akin to children for their parents.

initiates combat with ranged attacks and another uses sneak attacks to finish off dangerous enemies or pick their pockets. Wizards and sorcerers are prime targets for pickpocketing, as wands, scroll tubes, and potions are prized loot for dark one rogues with the Use Magic Device skill.

Evasion: Dark ones always have an escape plan and typically break off an encounter after only a few rounds. They slow down adventurers by impairing their vision, leading them through difficult or confusing terrain, or causing them more damage. Examples of these tactics include using a dark stalker's *fog cloud* ability at tunnel junctions, and using pitfalls or underground streams to force pursuers into making Climb or Swim checks, especially after the adventurers have lost Strength due to shadow essence poison. Their evasion tactics are often designed to split up their victims so they have another chance at executing a second ambush on fewer numbers.

VS. DARK ONES

Adventurers should expect short fights intended to relieve them of their treasure and attempts to seriously wound or kill one of them. If the party is dedicated to wiping out dark ones, they must prepare and execute a cautious search and destroy mission.

Detection: Between dark ones' shadow cloak abilities and bonuses to Hide and Move Silently checks, odds are that PCs will only notice them when they make sneak attacks. Having some kind of light source is a prime way to provoke them into doing this. Spells such as *detect chaos*, *glitterdust*, *owl's wisdom* (to increase a character's Spot check bonus), and *true seeing* are most beneficial when trying to detect dark ones. *Detect magic* is useful if dark ones use their shadow cloak ability.

Stealth and Trickery: Due to the dark ones' blindsight, it is very difficult to surprise them. Only a character affected by both *invisibility* and *silence* is likely to force a dark creeper or dark stalker to make a Spot check. The Disguise skill might also work in some cases, but the best way to get the drop on dark ones is for a PC to disguise herself as something harmless by using *polymorph* or the druid's wild shape ability.

Vision And Light: If someone in the party lacks darkvision, the PCs must protect their light sources from theft or destruction. Locked gauntlets can secure a light-shedding magic weapon or a torch, but the PCs should have access to several essential spells, such as *dancing lights*, *daylight*, and *light*. *Daylight* and *light* work best when cast on items that dark ones cannot easily take, such as breastplates and robes.

Protection: Although dark ones have to get close to take valuables from adventurers, PCs should expect poisoned ranged attacks. Spellcasters should prepare protective spells that can travel with their users, since most fights with dark ones are quick and mobile. Increase Fortitude saves with antitoxin, the Great Fortitude feat, and spells such as *bear's endurance* and *protection from chaos*. Treating poison using the Heal skill is more likely to succeed when supported by a healer's kit, the feats Skill Focus (Heal) and Self-Sufficient, and if the caregiver is under the effects of *owl's wisdom*. *Delay poison* and *neutralize poison* are also highly recommended.

Use Charm: Due to dark ones' weak Will saves, PC spellcasters have a good chance to overwhelm them with *charm person*, *color spray*, *command*, *hold person*, *lullaby*, and *sleep*.

Ranged Attacks: The average dark creeper does not have many hit points,

but it does benefit from its shadow cloak's concealment, good Reflex saves, and evasion. Dark stalkers are tougher, but they are in the minority, and they don't have the evasion ability (unless they're also rogues).

Magic missile is the best damage-causing spell to use against dark ones, since it ignores anything less than total concealment. Good secondary spells are *acid splash, chill touch, flame arrow, ghoul touch, poison, scorching ray, searing light,* and *stinking cloud;* these spells either do not allow a saving throw or are negated by a Fortitude saving throw, which is a dark one's weakest save. *Spectral hand* is almost a necessity for delivering spells with a range of touch. If a spell allows a Reflex saving throw, it is likely to be ineffective against a dark creeper's evasion ability.

Melee: A dark one's shadow cloak concealment negates roughly half of all attacks directed at the dark one, so the more attacks a PC can make, the better. While Two-Weapon Fighting is helpful, a monk's flurry of blows ability paired with the Stunning Fist feat can offer several attacks that require dark ones to make Fortitude saves.

Stick Together: Characters should avoid the temptation of leaving slow or disabled party members behind to chase thieving dark ones. Lone PCs are prime targets to these bandits.

DARK ONES AS CHARACTERS

Most dark ones find other humanoids too suspicious or contemptible to join their company for anything longer than a short-term venture. A creeper or stalker who joins a group of outsiders for an extended period of time is exceptional, but if the character and his new companions are able to work out their opposing views on light, they can easily get along. These natural rogues fit in best with those they feel are kindred spirits, such as bandits and spies. In addition to underground settings, dark ones work well in nocturnal city adventures as well as those that take place in dense woodlands and shadowy hills.

Dark Creepers

Humanoid

Dark creepers are known to be naturally stealthy and prefer the cool comfort of shadowy places. Spry and sinister-looking creatures, these dark ones' activities are usually assumed to have some nefarious purpose often far worse than their actual intent. Feared in numbers and demonized alone, dark creepers are able pilferers, but not innately evil creatures. Their interests lie in maintaining their own comfort and the safety of their communities, regardless of the cost to other races.

Members of this class often focus on skills and feats that compliment their natural agility and stealth. Although their shadow cloaks defend them from many threats, dark creepers fear relying on innate abilities alone and develop their skills accordingly.

Racial Traits

- Small: A dark creeper gains a +1 size bonus to Armor Class, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, and a +4 bonus on Hide checks, but they must use smaller weapons than Medium creatures do, and their lifting and carrying limits are three-quarters of those of Medium creatures.
- Speed: Dark creeper base land speed is 30 feet.
- Blindsight: Dark creepers can effectively see 60 feet without the need of light. Invisibility, darkness, and most kinds of concealment are irrelevant, although the dark creeper must have line of effect to the creature or object to discern it. See page 306 of the *Monster Manual* for a full description of blindsight.
- Light Sensitivity: Dark creepers are subject to a -2 penalty on attacks, saves, checks, and damage when they are exposed to sunlight or light equivalent to a *daylight* spell.
- Skills: A dark creeper gains a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks and a +4 racial bonus on Move Silently checks when in areas of darkness or shadowy illumination.
- Automatic Languages: Dark One and Undercommon.
- Favored Class: Dark creeper. The best multiclassing choices for a dark creeper are rogue and ranger.

Class Skills

The dark creeper's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the dark creeper monster class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Dark creepers are proficient with all simple weapons and light armor, but not with shields.

Feats: A dark creeper receives one feat at 1st level. After 5th level it gains feats normally according to character level, as shown on Table 3-2: Experience and Level-Dependent Benefits in the *Player's Handbook.*

Natural Armor: Dark creepers have thick hides and gain a +1 natural armor bonus to their armor class.

Shadow Cloak (Su): Dark creepers can conceal themselves in shadows the indicated number of times per day. This ability provides concealment in bright light and total concealment in shadows. Darkvision does not negate this concealment, but creatures that can see in magical darkness ignore this effect. Each use of this ability lasts 10 minutes per Hit Die, but the dark creeper can dismiss it at will.

Sneak Attack (Ex): A dark creeper of 2nd level or higher can sneak attack. This ability

NEW FEATS

These feats compliment the dark ones' style of banditry, but other characters (especially rogues) might find them useful as well.

CUTPURSE

You are able to pick the pockets of your melee opponents.

Prerequisites: Improved Unarmed Strike, Sleight of Hand 5 ranks.

Benefit: While engaged in combat, you may attempt to use the Sleight of Hand skill to pickpocket an enemy without provoking an attack of opportunity. This feat allows you to disguise your Sleight of Hand attempts as combat maneuvers.

Normal: Using Sleight of Hand in melee provokes an attack of opportunity.

DEEP POISONING

Your sneak attacks with poisoned weapons are more potent.

Prerequisites: Poison use, sneak attack.

Benefit: When making a sneak attack with a poisoned weapon, you may elect to exchange +1d6 sneak attack damage dice for a +1 increase to the DC of the victim's Fortitude saving throws (maximum 5d6 exchanged for DC +5). You sacrifice outright damage for accurately delivering poison to critical parts of the victim's anatomy.

EXPERT TUMBLER

You can tumble with exceptional deftness.

Prerequisites: Tumble 5 ranks.

Benefit: You may use the Tumble skill at normal speed with only a -5 penalty.

Normal: Using the Tumble skill at full speed incurs a -10 check penalty.

MONSTER CLASS BASICS

Monster classes first appeared in *Savage Species* and allow characters to play monstrous characters from 1st level with no level adjustment. Although monster classes are for the most part presented as character classes, there are several significant differences. Most notably, you must take a monster class as your first level, and characters who take levels in a monster class cannot multiclass until they have completed the full progression of the monster class. This rule keeps characters from gaining the benefits of a monster's type and then quickly switching to a standard class. Characters who take levels in a monster class do not gain Hit Dice, base attack progression, base save bonus progression, skills, and feats at every level, instead gaining them only when it is noted in the class progression. Also, monster classes are likely to alter a character's fundamental form, affecting their ability scores and natural armor. At every level a character gains an ability adjustment, this change stacks with all previous ability score adjustments. However, adjustments to natural armor do not stack. For complete rules and more examples of monster classes see Appendix 1 of *Savage Species*.

functions as the rogue ability of the same name. Sneak attack bonuses gained from the rogue class stack with those from dark creeper levels.

Evasion (Ex): At 3rd level, a dark creeper gains the evasion ability, which functions as the 2nd-level rogue ability.

Dark Stalkers

Humanoid

Aloof and decisive creatures, dark stalkers are rarely seen. With a size and shadowy grace far beyond that of their dark creeper brethren, those who see a dark stalker often mistake them for some breed of Underdark elf or dark fey. Not caring what outsiders suppose of them, dark stalkers strive to make their communities as comfortable and prosperous as possible, all while avoiding the taint of foreign ways of thinking or the accursed light.

The mystery and deadly grace of dark stalkers is reflected in their class progression by their continually advancing Dexterity and Charisma. While the former is often augmented by ranks in the stealthy and thieving skills these dark ones rely on, the latter is used to lead their dark creeper brethren. These traits, in addition to their shadow cloak ability, allow dark stalkers to remain hidden much of the time but be commanding presences when they do appear.

Racial Traits

- Medium: As Medium creatures, dark stalkers have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Speed: Dark stalker base land speed is 30 feet.
- Blindsight: Dark stalkers can effectively see 60 feet without the need of light. Invisibility, darkness, and most kinds of concealment are irrelevant, although the dark creeper must have line of effect to the creature or object to discern it. See page 306 of the *Monster Manual* for a full description of blindsight.
- Light Sensitivity: Dark stalkers are subject to a -2 penalty on attacks, saves, checks, and damage when they are exposed to sunlight or light equivalent to a *daylight* spell.
- Skills: A dark stalker gains a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks and a +4 racial bonus on Move Silently checks when in darkness or shadowy illumination.
- Automatic Languages: Dark One and Undercommon.
- Favored Class: Dark stalker. The best multiclassing choices for a dark stalker are rogue and sorcerer.

Class Skills

The dark stalker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the dark stalker monster class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Dark stalkers are proficient with all simple weapons, short swords, and all light armors, but not shields.

Feats: A dark stalker receives a feat at 1st level, and another one at 7th level. After 8th level it gains feats normally according to character level.

Shadow Cloak (Su): Dark stalkers can conceal themselves in shadows the indicated number of times per day. This ability provides concealment in bright light and total concealment in shadows. Darkvision does not negate this concealment, but creatures that can see in magical darkness ignore this effect. Each use of this ability lasts 10 minutes per Hit Die, but the dark stalker can dismiss it at will.

Poison Use (Ex): At 3rd level, dark stalkers are able to utilize poisons without accidentally poisoning themselves.

Sneak Attack (Ex): A dark stalker of 2nd level or higher can sneak attack. This ability functions as the rogue ability of the same name. Sneak attack bonuses gained from the rogue class stack with those from dark stalker levels.

***Fog Cloud* (Sp):** At 8th level, a dark stalker is able to cast *fog cloud* twice a day as a 5th-level sorcerer.

DARK CREEPER

Level	Hit Dice	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Skill Points	CR	Special
1st	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	(2 + Int mod) x 4	1	Feat, +1 natural armor, shadow cloak 1/day
2nd	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	-	2	+2 Con, +2 Dex, sneak attack +1d6
3rd	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	-	2	+2 Dex, evasion, shadow cloak 2/day
4th	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	-	3	+2 Str, +2 Wis, sneak attack +2d6
5th	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	-	3	+2 Dex, +2 Wis, shadow cloak 3/day

DARK STALKER

Level	Hit Dice	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Skill Points	CR	Special
1st	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	(2 + Int mod) x 4	1	Feat, +1 natural armor, shadow cloak 1/day
2nd	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	-	1	+2 Con, +2 Dex, sneak attack +1d6
3rd	1d8	+0	+0	+2	+0	-	2	+2 Str, poison use, shadow cloak 2/day
4th	2d8	+1	+0	+3	+0	(2 + Int mod)	2	+2 Con, +2 Dex, sneak attack +2d6
5th	2d8	+1	+0	+3	+0	-	3	+2 Cha, +2 Wis, shadow cloak 3/day
6th	2d8	+1	+0	+3	+0	-	3	+2 Str, +2 natural armor, sneak attack +3d6
7th	3d8	+2	+1	+3	+1	(2 + Int mod)	4	+2 Int, +2 Wis, feat,
8th	3d8	+2	+1	+3	+1	-	4	+2 Cha, +2 Dex, *fog cloud* 2/day

Collaborative Campaign Building

by Jacob Steinman
illustrated by Niklas Janssen

Making the Players Work For It

The standard homebrew campaign tends to look something like this: The DM creates the setting, history, maps, NPCs, and villains; chooses appropriate prestige classes; and sets up the plot. The players make characters, plop them into the DM's game, and stumble off in search of adventure.

Several disadvantages can make this approach unattractive to players and DMs alike. Creating an interesting, viable campaign world requires a great deal of time and energy. While the DM is quite familiar with the setting once it's complete, the players typically aren't. Worse, unlike with published settings, no easily available resources exist to help players become familiar with the setting. The players and DM might have very different ideas of what makes an interesting campaign. Nothing is worse than spending hours building a campaign only to have your players look at it and say, "We'd rather play something else."

You can avoid this problem by building your campaign world with your players. Involving them in the campaign building process from the beginning can help ensure greater engagement from everyone, and it gives you a world that everyone wants to play in.

THE BIG RULE: COMMUNICATE!

The process of building a campaign world is fun and exciting, but it takes a lot of work. Most importantly, it requires a great deal of communication. Keep in touch with your players at all times throughout the world-building process, and make sure they keep in touch with you and each other as well. The DM must facilitate conversation between himself and the players.

Many different means of keeping in contact with your players exist, including emails, phone calls, websites, and Internet message boards. You will likely forget any idea not written down, so written communication is the best way to go. You can send emails to multiple people or forward them as needed. You could even set up a special email account just for discussing your campaign. A campaign website (see *Dragon* #293) can prove useful, since it can be updated and changed as the campaign develops. Alternatively, get everyone together on your regular gaming night, order your pizza, and discuss your ideas face to face (make sure to take notes). Keep records, preferably in multiple places. The great idea you had the night before might never come again.

GETTING STARTED: THE CAMPAIGN SURVEY

Once you have a communications system, begin building your world with a campaign survey. A campaign survey involves a short questionnaire designed to give you a general idea of what your players are looking for in their campaign world. Don't look for details or worry if the ideas are coherent for right now. Just look to get a sense of what your players want in the campaign.

When designing questions for your survey, make your questions open-ended, not multiple choice. This functions as a tool to get everyone's brains going, and multiple-choice questions restrict people's thought processes. Let your players' imaginations run wild!

Every campaign survey should have at least these eight questions:

1. What races do you want in the world? What races don't you want?
2. What classes and prestige classes do you want available? Are there classes that shouldn't be available?

USING PUBLISHED WORLDS

Elements of this article can be modified for use with published worlds, such as Eberron or the Forgotten Realms. Use the campaign survey to get an idea of what parts of the world interest your players and the organizations, places, or non-player characters with which they'd like to interact. You can even collaboratively design a small part of the world, such as the PCs' hometown or the neighborhood of the city where they live.

3. What flavor should the world have? High fantasy (brave and heroic) or low fantasy (grim and gritty)?
4. What kind of cultures do you want to see? Any particular cultures we should or shouldn't emulate?
5. Who or what should be the dominant race? (Most worlds assume humans, but this doesn't have to be true, and it can be very interesting if it's not).
6. What should the terrain of the world be like? Should it be like Earth? A water world, desert world, forest world, or what?
7. What kind of role should gods and religion play in the world?
8. How prevalent should arcane magic be? How much of an influence should it have on the world?

Other possible questions or subjects for questions include: Starting levels, villains they'd like to fight, the age of the world, world-hopping, the role the PCs should play, supplements they'd like to use, and so on. Put in a "further comments" section, so people can put down thoughts that don't fit into your survey. Compile the results of your survey, and send them out to your players.

The number of choices available from such open-ended questions might overwhelm some players. To prepare for this possibility, keep a large series of choices for each question (somewhere between ten and thirty) on hand. Players who feel overwhelmed by the open-ended questions can instead select their top three "most favorite" and "least favorite" from each list. This extra structure in the survey can help alleviate feelings of confusion, while still giving your players a great deal of creative freedom.

For some real fun, distribute the survey to people outside of your game. Give it to other gaming friends, family, or whomever else might show interest (not total strangers on the street). This will give you a lot more material and can produce interesting results, but remember that the opinions of you and your players take priority. You have to play in this world, after all.

An extended sample of this process runs throughout the article. In this first example, assume the players have already filled out the campaign survey, and the DM has compiled the results.

Example: *"Thanks to everyone for taking the time to fill out the campaign survey. The results are pretty interesting so far.*

"Everyone seems to be interested in high fantasy. Two people were interested in half-orcs, and three of you were interested in dwarves and gnomes. No one wanted to see elves. One person wanted to see a Japanese-style culture, with ninjas in particular, and two wanted some swashbuckling pirate action. There's a split on what the dominant race should be. Two people suggested humans, two suggested non-humans. Three of you wanted to do a waterworld, and everyone seems to feel that the gods should play a pretty important role in the world. There were no strong feelings on arcane magic either way."

DM INPUT

The summary results should give you a pretty good idea of how the world is shaping up. Some things will likely leap out at you: clear trends in what your players want and ideas that you feel are missing. Decide what ideas you really like and which ones you dislike, and start to put together a basic structure for the world. Again, this doesn't need much detail, and it might take you a few tries. You want something very loose that ties together the basics of what you've gotten out of the campaign survey and your own ideas. It shouldn't take you more than a paragraph or two to write up, so you can try several variations and even present a couple of possibilities to your players.

Example: *Looking at the results of the survey, the DM decides to make the world dominated by non-humans, a concept that interests her more. A few rough sketches eventually lead her to this idea: The last war of the gods flooded the world of Waterus. Now, the Holy Armada of the gnome artificers and their dwarven marines rule the waves. After the elves abandoned the surface for undersea kingdoms, only a rag-tag alliance of humans and orcs remained standing between the gnomes and their conquest of the world.*

ASSIGN PLAYER DUTIES

Send the outline around to your players and get some feedback. Once you have chosen a basic world structure, start to delve into it more deeply. As DM, you should pass out duties to players so they work on things they have skills in and find interesting. Possible duties or roles to fill are as follows.

Map Maker: The map maker provides many of the maps the campaign needs, from world and regional maps down to city and village maps. This person can help with other aspects of the project as well, depending on how many maps the setting requires and how detailed they need to be.

Class Collector: This player combs through various supplements to find classes (both core classes and prestige classes) appropriate to the world. You might have multiple people do this.

Race Collector: Similar to the class collector, this player looks through a number of supplements to find suitable PC races for the world. You might have multiple people do this.

Culture/Country Designer: This player or the race collector might develop the culture of whichever races are appropriate to the world.

Religion Designer: This player creates the main pantheons of the world, what races or cultures worship which gods and how the gods interact.

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

Players can make use of the suggestions in this article too! Go talk to your DM, and let her know that you'd like to help expand the campaign world. Chances are, unless your DM has nothing else to do with her time, she'll appreciate the help immensely. Remember that you're offering to help, not to improve her campaign or show her what she's doing wrong.

Let your players work on the things that interest them. If two of them want the same assignment, draw straws, or let them collaborate. Players with a real yearning to use a certain race or class are typically more than willing to do the leg work on it. The guy who really wants to play a half-orc barbarian ninja should be able to come up all sorts of ideas about where half-orc barbarian ninjas come from.

Similarly, if a player has a particular talent for something, whether it's map-making or monster building, see if you can get her to take on that task. Do not force your players to do something

they don't want to! Your friends are not your employees, and this project should be a joy, not a chore.

You can take on some tasks yourself, of course. The DM of the sample campaign might decide to design the Gnome Empire, since gnomes serve as the primary villains of the upcoming campaign.

Finally, remember that not everyone has the same amount of free time. Don't punish a player because he cannot devote the same amount of time to world building as the others. Let him do what he can, and always keep his input in mind.

BRING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

The DM now needs to help bring all of the players' ideas together. See what elements you can integrate and which ones you cannot. Don't fear changing the players' ideas to make everything fit, but make sure you tell them when you do. Offer suggestions for change, rather than just making changes outright.

Example: *The religion designer for the campaign creates two separate faiths. The gnomes follow a monotheistic faith, while the humans and orcs take a pantheistic approach to religion. This provides the source of religious conflict that occurs within the world.*

Looking back at the initial outline reveals that the world was flooded during the war of the gods. The player interpreted this as a religious conflict, but the DM envisioned this as actual war between divine forces. After some discussion, the players and DM decide to go with the DM's interpretation, and they change things slightly. The gnome god, a former member of the human and orc pantheon, went mad during a quest to bring order to the universe. He created his own servitors, whom some gnomes revere as patron saints (giving the gnomes a few options for clerics of different types). One of the players suggests that the dwarves should have their own religion as well, and the DM decides the dwarven pantheon deliberately allied with the gnome god, turning against the gods whose worshippers had ruled the world for so long. This approach satisfies everyone and lays the foundation for the campaign's history.

Go ahead and add your own ideas as well; this world belongs to you too! Just communicate with your players when you do. A word of caution: The DM already holds a position of power, and some players might hesitate about speaking out against your ideas. Let the players guide the direction of the world, take their criticisms politely and their ideas seriously.

As the process moves along, you will start to fill in more details. Not every corner of the world needs definition. It's better if you leave some room for expansion so your group can add new ideas later on.

Show the final version to your players. If you need to make any last minute adjustments, do so, but don't spend too much time on it. At some point, just buckle up and start playing!

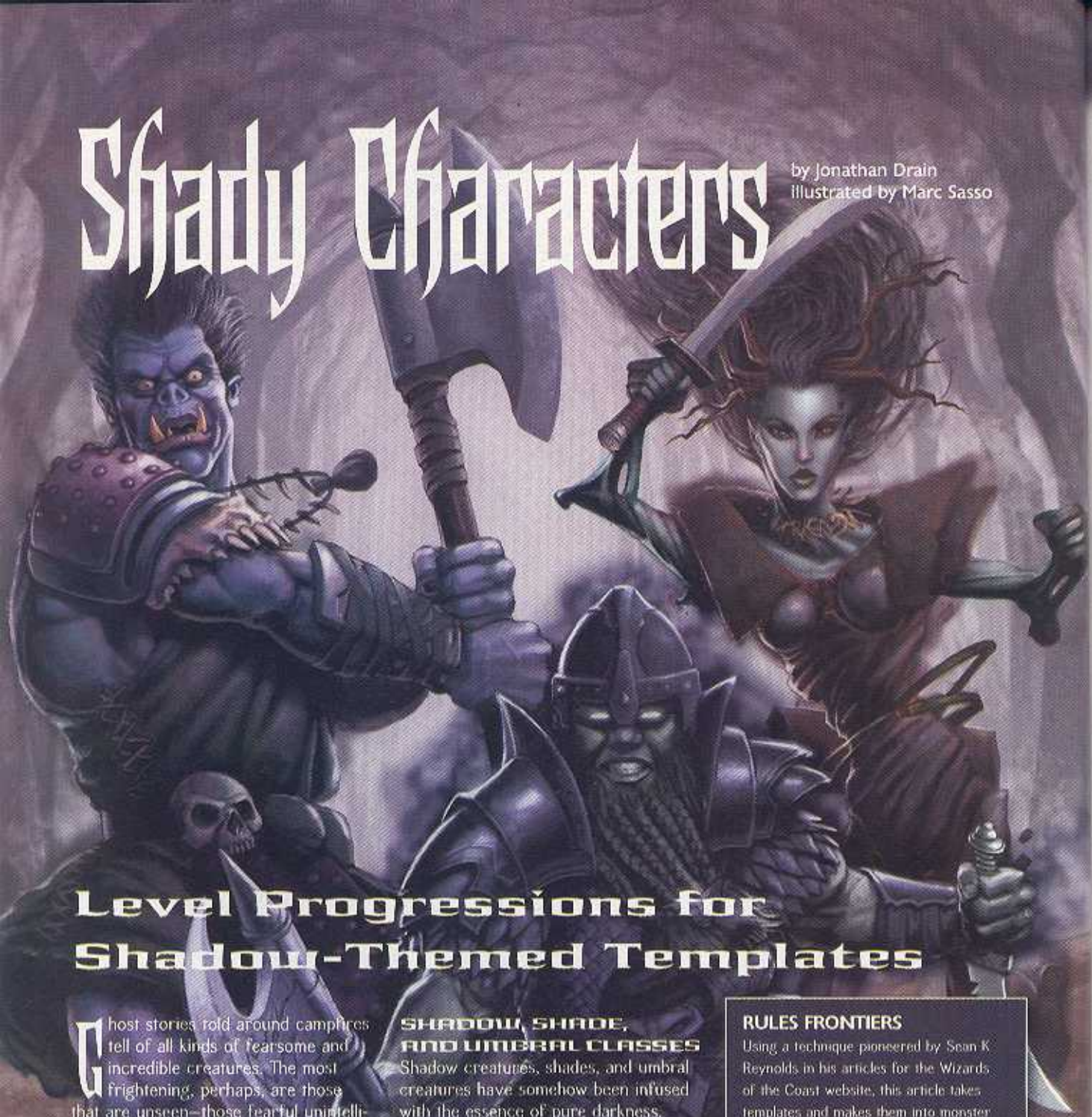
The collaboration doesn't have to end once the game starts. Get your players' input on the sorts of adventures they want to go on, the directions they want the campaign to move in, and how they would like their characters to develop.

This sort of approach might make certain elements of the campaign more explicit (it's hard to keep secrets when your players contributed to the building of the campaign), but it ensures that your players become really engaged with the world. You can always throw in a few secrets about the world after the collaborative process is finished. For the ultimate collaborative campaign, take turns acting as DM, and give everyone a chance to expand the story.

Building a collaborative campaign world takes a great deal of time, but everyone in your gaming group becomes engaged in the world. The process of building the world can be almost as fun as gaming in it. Do not rush it: Good ideas sometimes take time. Enjoy the creation process. Once the campaign starts, you and your players can continue to develop the world for as long as you want. Doing this adds more depth to the world, and it helps keep everyone interested. This sort of collaborative campaign often lasts longer than a DM-generated world and provides the sort of stories you and your players will talk about for years to come.

Shady Characters

by Jonathan Drain
Illustrated by Marc Sasso



Level Progressions for Shadow-Themed Templates

Ghost stories told around campfires tell of all kinds of fearsome and incredible creatures. The most frightening, perhaps, are those that are unseen—those fearful unintelligible forms comprised of animate darkness. These tales play on all mortals' inborn fears of the dark, the unknown, and the incomprehensible.

Unfortunately for all living creatures, these fears are well placed. Mysterious natives of the Plane of Shadow, shades tainted by that same darkened realm, and life-draining umbral abominations form armies of darkness that rule an eternal night. Not only do these deadly creatures most certainly exist, but many of them keep a sinister secret: that they too were once mortal creatures.

Shadow, Shade, and Umbral Classes

Shadow creatures, shades, and umbral creatures have somehow been infused with the essence of pure darkness. Whether through a heritage of darkness, excessive exposure to the Plane of Shadow, or from the taint of necromantic energies, these creatures are filled with the power of night.

How a creature is infused with shadow determines when its powers manifest. While shadow creatures and shades are born with ties to the Plane of Shadow, umbral creatures are undead created from once-living creatures. This is not to say that a character cannot gradually become a shadow creature or shade, or begin play as an umbral creature—if they meet the

RULES FRONTIERS

Using a technique pioneered by Sean K Reynolds in his articles for the Wizards of the Coast website, this article takes templates and makes them into monster classes similar to those presented in *Savage Species*. These rules might prove problematic for much the same reason some monster classes are difficult to play with: A character gaining the template over several levels gains powerful abilities that might be unusual for character of that level, but the character doesn't gain Hit Die advancements, new skills, increased base attack, and so on. This makes for unpredictable character performance. Carefully consider the effects of giving a template class to a character, particularly one with few Hit Dice.

requirements to take these classes they can do so at any level—it's just up to the DM to determine the specifics of how this happens.

Once chosen, each level of shadow creature, shade, and umbral creature is taken much like a prestige class, except that the character does not increase Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw bonuses, or skill points for taking those levels, nor does the character gain feats or ability score increases as described on Table 3–2 in the *Player's Handbook*. Each level taken increases the base creature's ECL by +1. Shadow creature, shade, and umbral creature levels do not count as class levels for the purpose of determining character level (the sum of racial Hit Dice and class levels).

SHADOW CREATURE

The Plane of Shadow is a warped and indistinct realm, a dark reflection coexistent with the Material Plane. Mortals travel there at their own peril, for it is all too easy for the foolish and weak-willed to become trapped inside it. Any creature native to the Plane of Shadow is infused with its tainted essence, being a thing less of substance and more of intangible shadows.

Any corporeal creature can become a shadow creature. The shadow creature template has a level adjustment of +2.

Shadow Creature Class Features

All of the following are class features of the shadow creature monster class.

Cold Resistance: At 1st level, the character gains cold resistance equal to 5 plus his Hit Dice. This resistance increases as the character gains Hit Dice (maximum cold resistance 20).

Low-light Vision: A character with shadow creature levels can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. He retains the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions.

Move Silently: At 1st level, the character becomes naturally skilled at sneaking, gaining a +2 racial bonus on Move Silently checks. At 2nd level, this bonus increases to +6.

Shadow Blend (Su): At 1st level, the character gains the shadow blend ability, allowing him to fade into the shadows.

SHADOW-THEMED CREATURES 3.5 UPDATE

The templates used to create the classes here were first printed in several different products. The shade originally appeared as a playable race in the Forgotten Realms accessory *Races of Faerûn*, and the umbral template was first printed in *Savage Species*. The shadow template originally appeared in the *Manual of the Planes*, but has since been updated with the following changes. The template grants a creature the extraplanar subtype, and does not change the creature's type. The shadow blend ability of all shadow creatures now grants total concealment. The optional supernatural abilities now include: +2 luck bonus on saves, 1/day *cause fear* as a 5th-level caster, damage reduction 5/magic, evasion (as the rogue class feature), 1/day *mirror image* as a 5th-level caster, 1/day *plane shift* as a 15th-level caster (to or from the Plane of Shadow only), and fast healing 2. Shadow creatures have a level adjustment of +2.

More information on updated material is available from the *D&D 3.5 Accessory Update*, which can be downloaded from the Dungeons & Dragons page of the Wizards of the Coast website, www.wizards.com.

ECL AND LA

A creature's effective character level (ECL) is the sum of its racial Hit Dice, level adjustment, and class levels. Use character level for most game functions; use ECL for awarding experience, determining starting equipment, and determining how much experience the character needs to gain a new level. Level adjustment (LA) is a measure of how much more powerful a creature is than other creatures of its Hit Dice. A level adjustment provides a numeric comparison with the seven standard races from the *Player's Handbook*, showing how much more powerful that creature is than one of the standard races, in terms of levels.

For more information on ECL and LA, see the *Monster Manual* glossary and Monsters as Races on page 172 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. *Savage Species* explains ECL, LA, and monster classes in chapter 3.

MONSTER CLASS BASICS

Monster classes first appeared in *Savage Species* and allow characters to play monstrous characters from 1st level with no level adjustment. Although monster classes are for the most part presented as character classes, there are several significant differences. Most notably, characters who take levels in a monster class cannot multiclass until they have completed the full progression of the monster class. This rule keeps characters from gaining the benefits of a monster's type and then quickly switching to a standard class. Characters who take levels in a monster class do not gain Hit Dice, base attack progression, base save bonus progression, skills, and feats at every level, instead gaining them only when it is noted in the class progression. Also, monster classes are likely to alter a character's fundamental form, affecting its ability scores and natural armor. At every level a character gains an ability adjustment, this change stacks with all previous ability score adjustments. However, adjustments to natural armor do not stack. For complete rules and more examples of monster classes see Appendix 1 of *Savage Species*.

SHADOW CREATURE

Level	CR	Special
1st	+0	Cold resistance, low-light vision, Move Silently +2, shadow blend (concealment), speed increase
2nd	+1	Darkvision 60 ft., Move Silently +6, shadow blend (total concealment), supernatural abilities, extraplanar subtype

This ability grants him concealment in any lighting conditions less than full daylight. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or a *continual flame* spell, does not affect this ability, but a *daylight* spell or darkvision negates this concealment. Concealment allows the character to make Hide checks without having anything to hide behind, and all attacks made to hit him have a 20% miss chance.

At 2nd level, the character's shadow blend ability becomes more potent, improving to grant total concealment. All attacks against it have a 50% miss chance (instead of the previous 20% miss chance), and opponents cannot make attacks of opportunity on the character. Full daylight, a *daylight* spell, or darkvision negates this total concealment.

Darkvision: At 2nd level, the character gains darkvision to a range of 60 feet. Darkvision works like normal vision, except that he requires no light to function, and vision is only in black and white.

Speed Increase: At 2nd level, the character's base land speed increases by 50%.

Supernatural Abilities (Su): At 2nd level, the character gains one or more bonus supernatural abilities from the list below. The character may choose one ability, plus another for every 4 Hit Dice he has. He can also later choose more abilities if he gains enough Hit Dice.

- +2 luck bonus on all saving throws
- *Cause fear* 1/day as a 5th-level caster
- Damage reduction 5/magic
- Evasion (as the rogue class feature)
- *Mirror image* 1/day as a 5th-level caster
- *Plane shift* 1/day as 15th-level caster (to or from the Plane of Shadow only)
- Fast healing 2

Extraplanar Subtype: At 2nd level, the character gains the extraplanar subtype. The character is now considered native to the Plane of Shadow.

SHADE

Not to be mistaken for an undead creature, a shade is a humanoid whose soul has been tainted by the essence of shadow. Such a transformation might take place when creatures from the Material Plane are exposed to the strange energies of the Plane of Shadow for an extended period of time, a process that usually takes centuries. However, whole cities and races that have physically immigrated to the Plane of Shadow have been affected by its dark taint en masse, causing entire populations to become shades.

Any humanoid can become a shade. The shade template (found in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*) has a level adjustment of +4.

Shade Class Features

All of the following are class features of the shade monster class. However, while shades are in bright light, such as full daylight, a well-lit room, or a *daylight* spell, none of the abilities of the shade monster class function. A shade in a bright area retains the outsider type.

Shadesight (Su): At 1st level, the character gains darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Darkvision works like normal vision, except that it requires no light to function, and vision is only in black and white. At 2nd level, the character's shadesight ability improves, allowing her darkvision to penetrate even darkness effects such as magical darkness.

Speed Increase: The character's base speed increases by 20 feet.

***Invisibility* (Sp):** At 1st level, the character can use *invisibility* once per day, with a caster level equal to her character level. At 3rd level, she can use this ability once per round. The shade can only use this ability on herself.

***Control Light* (Sp):** A shade can decrease the levels of light within a 100-foot radius of herself by a factor of 10% per character level. This decreases the overall effective range of vision for characters and creatures dependant on light by the same percentage. For example, a human can normally see 20 feet by the light of a torch. If a shade were to diminish the light by 50%, the human could see only 10 feet.

Shade Abilities: At 1st level, the shade gains a +1 luck bonus on saves, a +1 deflection bonus to AC, +1 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks, and a +2 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. At each subsequent shade level, she gains these abilities again, stacking with the previous bonus, so that a 4th-level shade has a +4 bonus of the appropriate types on saves, AC, Listen and Spot checks, and a +8 bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. Also, beginning at 1st level, shades do not suffer skill check penalties due to darkness.

Outsider Type: At 1st level, the character's type changes to outsider (native). Shades are not extraplanar on the Material Plane and can be raised and resurrected normally. Creatures that were already outsiders do not have their types changed when taking levels in this class.

Ability Score Increases: These changes are applied as racial bonuses to the character's ability scores. These bonuses stack with any existing racial bonuses.

Attack/Damage Bonus: At 2nd level, the character learns to use the darkness to her advantage in a fight, gaining a +2 competence bonus on attack and damage rolls.

***Shadow Image* (Sp):** This ability, useable three times per day, functions as per a *mirror image* spell cast at the character's level. This creates 1d4 figments of the shade, +1 per three levels.

Fast Healing (Ex): At 3rd level, the character gains fast healing, allowing her to regain 2 hit points per round. Fast healing is just like normal healing though it does not restore hit points lost from starvation, thirst, or suffocation, and it does not allow a creature to regrow or reattach lost body parts.

***Shadow Stride* (Sp):** A shade of 8 Hit Dice or more can vanish from her current location and reappear in any shadowy area within 300 feet, as a move action. This ability is useable once every 2 rounds.

***Shadow Travel* (Sp):** Once per day, a shade of 12 Hit Dice or more can *greater teleport* to a shadowy locale on the same world or *plane shift* to the Plane of Shadow. These abilities are as the spells cast at the character's level.

Spell Resistance: At 4th-level, the character gains spell resistance equal to 11 plus her character level.

THE SHADE

Level	CR	Special
1st	+0	Shadesight, speed increase *invisibility* 1/day, *control light*, shade abilities, outsider type
2nd	+1	Con +2, attack/damage bonus, *shadow image*
3rd	+1	Fast healing 2, *shadow stride*, *invisibility* 1/round
4th	+2	Cha +2, *shadow travel*, spell resistance

UMBRAL CREATURE

A silent creature of pure darkness, the undead shadow is feared by commoners and favored by the dark necromancers who create them. Stories tell of entire nations wiped out by these creatures, as their victims quickly rise as shadows themselves.

Any creature of the aberration, animal, dragon, giant, humanoid, magical beast or monstrous humanoid types with a Charisma score of at least 8 can become an umbral creature. The umbral creature template has a level adjustment of +5.

Umbral Creature Class Features

All of the following are class features of the umbral creature class.

Darkvision: At 1st level, the character gains darkvision to a range of 60 feet. Darkvision works like normal vision, except that it requires no light to function and is only in black and white.

Light Fortification (Ex): At 1st level, the character naturally gains the benefits of the light fortification armor property. When a critical hit or sneak attack is scored on the character, there is a 25% chance that the extra damage is negated, and the damage is instead rolled normally. The character always benefits from this ability, regardless of whether or not he is wearing armor.

Move Silently: Also at 1st level, the character becomes more skilled at sneaking, gaining a +5 racial bonus on Move Silently checks. At 2nd level, this bonus increases to +10.

Ability Score Changes: These changes are applied as racial adjustments to the character's ability scores that stack with any existing racial bonuses or penalties. Where a penalty to an ability score is applied, this is a permanent change and cannot be removed by any spell or effect.

Moderate Fortification (Ex): At 2nd level, the character naturally gains the benefits of the moderate fortification armor property. When a critical hit or sneak attack is scored on the character, there is a 75% chance that the extra damage is negated, and the damage is instead rolled normally. The character always benefits from this ability, regardless of whether or not he is wearing armor.

Fly: At 3rd level, the character gains a fly speed of 40 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Heavy Fortification (Ex): At 3rd level, the character naturally gains the benefits of the heavy fortification armor property. When a critical hit or sneak attack is scored on the character, there is a 100% chance that the extra damage is negated, and the damage is instead rolled normally. The character always benefits from this ability, regardless of whether or not he is wearing armor.

Undead Type: At 4th level, the character's type changes to undead. Hit Dice from previous levels are changed to d12s and are rerolled. All Hit Dice gained from this point on are also d12s. Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. The character also no longer has a Constitution score and thus no longer gains a bonus to hit points, Concentration skill checks, or Fortitude saves. He is now unaffected by all effects that would have required him to make Fortitude saves (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless). Being undead, the character no longer needs to breathe, eat, or sleep.

Turn Resistance (Ex): Also at 4th level, the character is treated as having two extra Hit Dice for the purposes of being turned or rebuked.

Create Spawn (Su): At 5th level, the character gains the ability to raise fallen foes as umbral creatures under his control. Any aberration, animal, dragon, giant, humanoid, magical beast, or monstrous humanoid reduced to 0 Strength by the character's incorporeal touch attack rises as an umbral creature in 1d4 rounds. Spawn are under the command of the character that created them and remain enslaved until their master's destruction. The character can control a number of spawn equal to double his HD. If the character creates a new umbral creature that causes him to exceed this limit, the spawn longest under his control is released.

Incorporeal Subtype: At 5th level, the character becomes a fully incorporeal creature, gaining all the qualities of the incorporeal subtype. Most notably, this includes the power to pass through physical objects, a deflection bonus to the character's AC equal to his Charisma bonus, and the ability to always Move Silently. From this point on, the character can only be damaged by other incorporeal creatures, spell-like abilities, supernatural abilities, and magic or magic weapons. Even when hit by magic or magic weapons from a corporeal source, the character still has a 50% chance to ignore the damage—except for force effects, such as *magic missile*, or from a ghost touch weapon.

However, since characters can no longer affect or be affected by physical objects, they can no longer hold or manipulate any weapons, armor, or items they might possess. The only exceptions to this are weapons or armor with the ghost touch ability. Also, the umbral character loses all the special attacks of its race and class, including spellcasting ability.

The character also gains an incorporeal touch attack. This is a natural attack that ignores material armor, even magic armor, unless it is made of force (such as *mage armor* or *bracers of armor*) or has the ghost touch ability. Characters do not gain multiple attacks with natural weapons for having a high base attack bonus. This attack does not deal damage to a target's hit points, but rather deals Strength damage determined by the character's size.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Creatures killed by the character's incorporeal touch rise as umbral creatures under his command (see the create spawn ability).

See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 294 for a full description of the incorporeal subtype.

THE UMBRAL CREATURE

Level	CR	Special
1st	+0	Darkvision, light fortification, Move Silently +5, -4 Int, +2 Wis, +2 Cha
2nd	+1	Moderate fortification, Move Silently +10, Dex +2
3rd	+2	Fly 40 ft., heavy fortification
4th	+2	Undead type, turn resistance +2
5th	+3	Create spawn, incorporeal subtype, inescapable craving

by Clifford Horowitz
Images provided by Atari

Shadows of Undrentide™

Magic Poison Qualities

Shadows of Undrentide, the second expansion pack for *Neverwinter Nights*, presents a new adventure. The expansion tells a tale parallel to the original game in which you assume the role of a young student on the verge of graduation from a small adventuring academy, almost ready to go out into the world. Unfortunately, a kobold raid interrupts you before you receive your final test. Normally, kobolds would pose no threat to your master, the dwarven wizard Drogan, but in the fight, one of the creatures stabs him with a poisoned blade, and he falls. Most disquieting of all, however, is that curative magic does nothing to purge the venom, even when cast by powerful Harpers. The poison is magical and resists attempts to neutralize it.

Thus begins your final test: Find those responsible, and return with the cure. This article takes the idea presented by the attack on Drogan and expands it, presenting a small list of magic qualities that can enhance any poison.

Brewing Magic Poison

Creating a magic poison is similar to creating a potion. However, their magic enhancements more closely resemble magic weapon enhancements in that they give the venom additional abilities that usually can stack with one another.

The person attempting to create the magic poison must have the Brew Potion feat and know all the spells listed as requirements for the properties he wishes to add.

The formula for calculating the cost of brewing a potion is 25 gp x spell level x caster level. Use this formula for determining the cost for brewing a magic poison, but replace the 25 gp figure with the cost of one dose of the type of poison to be enhanced (see page 297 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). For example, brewing a dose of *gripping ungol dust* costs 1,000 gp (cost of one dose of ungol dust) x 2 (gripping equals a 2nd-level spell) x 3 (its 3rd-level caster), or 6,000 gp.

Poison Qualities

You can add the following qualities to any mundane poison.

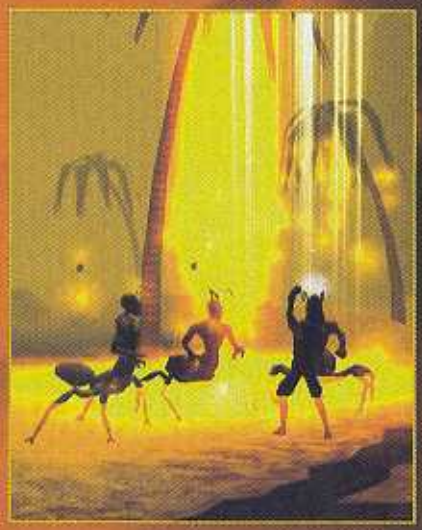
Concentrated: A poison with this enhancement is considerably more lethal than normal poison. Using special distilling processes, the brewer intensifies the poison repeatedly, guaranteeing the venom has maximum possible effect.

Concentrated poison deals maximum damage each time it inflicts damage. Concentrated poisons that cause paralyzation or unconsciousness instead have their durations maximized.

Faint necromancy; CL 5th; Brew Potion, Maximize Spell, *bestow curse;* Price 15 x poison cost per dose.

Contagious: Contagious poison seeps into the skin of the victim in addition to wherever else in the body it attacks. By inundating itself in the host body this way, the poison turns the victim's sweat and touch into a weaker version of itself.

Once contagious poison affects a victim, whether by its initial exposure or the secondary effects, the venom seeps into his body. While it deals no further damage and does not prevent recovery, it taints the victim and effectively turns his touch into a contact poison. The poison affects the next creature the victim touches with bare flesh. The contagious poison can only affect one additional creature in this way. The poison transmitted does not have the contagious quality, but it has any other magic qualities of the original poison.



Faint necromancy; CL 3rd; Brew Potion, *ghoul touch;* Price 6 x poison cost per dose.

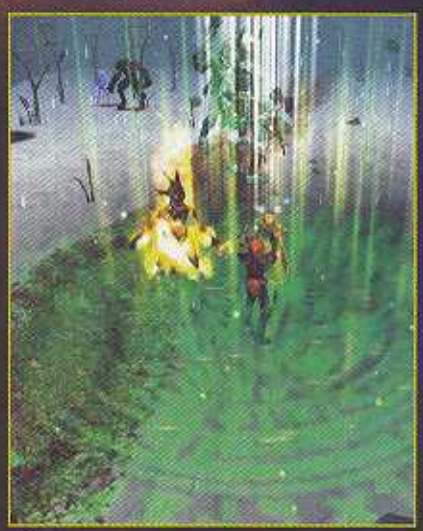
Destructive: This property can only be added to poison already enhanced with the repeating property. Destructive poison is among the most vicious kinds of poison available. This lingering attack kills its victims slowly and leaves many survivors crippled.

Treat destructive venom as normal repeating venom. However, should the poison manage to reduce an ability score to 0 (and that doesn't kill the victim), the poison begins to convert the ability damage into permanent ability drain at its normal damage rate. For example, a dose of *gripping repeating destructive insanity mist* that has reduced its victim to 0 Wisdom through ability damage begins to convert that damage to permanent ability drain at a rate of 2d6 points of Wisdom per day. Victims surviving this poison still regain any temporary damage at the normal rate.

Moderate necromancy; CL 5th; Brew Potion, *inflict serious wounds;* Price 15 x poison cost per dose.

Gripping: Gripping poison seizes a victim and refuses to let go. Once ingested, this poison works ever deeper into the body, making it harder to purge.

Poisons with this quality deal no additional damage, but the time required to recover from them is significantly longer. Victims exposed to this variety of poison must make a Fortitude save and another save 1 minute later. However, if either of these saves fail, the poison works its way into the victim's body. Once embedded, the victim cannot recover from the damage the poison dealt until purged of the venom.



Gripping poison differs from most other qualities in that it has degrees. The number of successful Fortitude saves the victim must make in order to overcome a gripping poison equals the number of degrees a poison has in gripping. The victim makes one Fortitude save per day, and once he makes a number of successful Fortitude saves equal to the poison's gripping degree, he is free of the effect and can begin to heal normally.

A poison may not have more than five degrees in this quality. To determine the cost of enhancing a poison with multiple degrees of this quality, simply multiply the cost of the gripping poison by the number of degrees desired.

Neutralize poison does not automatically remove a gripping poison from the victim, but it does count as one successful Fortitude save.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; Brew Potion, *bear's endurance;* Price 6 x poison cost per dose x number of degrees.

Mounting: Only a poison already enhanced with the gripping property can have the mounting property added to it. Mounting poison inundates the host body just like gripping poison, but it digs much deeper, seeping into the body more thoroughly.

Treat mounting poison as normal gripping poison, except that each failed Fortitude save adds +2 to the DC for future saves, to a maximum of double the normal DC.

Faint necromancy; CL 3rd; Brew Potion, *inflict moderate wounds;* Price 6 x poison cost per dose.

Potent: Concentrated poison is brewed for optimal effectiveness, but its performance is still limited by its base toxicity. Potent poison, magically treated to exceed its normal limitations, expands on its potential to do harm.

A potent poison deals half again as much damage as normal. Poisons that only cause unconsciousness or paralyzation have the duration of their effects increased by 50%.

Faint necromancy; CL 3rd; Brew Potion, *death knell;* Price 6 x poison cost per dose.

Repeating: This property can only be added to poison already enhanced with the gripping property. Repeating poison doesn't just rest in the body and refuse to leave; it continues its assault for as long as it manages to hold onto the victim.

Treat repeating poison as normal gripping poison, except that repeating poison deals its secondary damage each day the victim fails his Fortitude saving throw to overcome the poison.

Faint necromancy; CL 5th; Brew Potion, *inflict serious wounds;* Price 15 x poison cost per dose.

Spell Resistant: This dangerous poison resists magic manipulation. It rebuffs magic attempts to neutralize or slow it.

Spell resistant poison has a spell resistance score against all spells that attempt to slow or neutralize it. The poison's spell resistance is equal to the poison's base Fortitude save DC. For example, a dose of *spell resistant shadow essence* has spell resistance 17.

Spellcasters hoping to aid the poison victim with magic must first beat the poison's spell resistance with a caster level check, just as if the poison were a creature.

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Brew Potion, *dispel magic;* Price 15 x poison cost per dose.

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

A plethora of poisons exist in D&D, and while they all have different effects, they all work the same way. Imagine your players' fright when they face a poison that doesn't respond to magic and doesn't go away on its own. Any enemy packing such a weapon instantly becomes a memorable threat.

You can build entire organizations around one particularly potent form of venom. This potent extract is a guild secret given only to those who prove skillful enough to be worthy of using it. The poison could even serve as the guild's calling card, allowing you to build up both the organization's—and the poison's—reputation before confronting your party with either.

Another option is to grant these poison enhancements to creatures. For example, a group of wyverns that live on a small mountain surrounded by a swamp possess a particularly virulent poison that not only prevents its victims from recovering from the poison, but also resist any magic attempts at slowing or neutralizing it. A reward might exist for the destruction of these beasts, but the rumors of their potent poisons keeps many would-be adventurers at bay.

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

If your character opposes the use of poisons, he has little use for these enhanced poisons. However, that doesn't mean you can't put them to use in creating your character.

Much like in *Shadows of Undrentide*, magically enhanced poisons can serve as the impetus for adventure. Perhaps your master suffered the same fate as Drogan, and you hunt for a cure before his time runs out. Maybe your mother suffers from a lingering poison that resists all magic and mundane neutralizing effects. In a frightening twist, perhaps you suffer from the effects of a poison whose effects you cannot overcome, and you must venture forth in a weakened condition to find a cure.

DORK TOWER®
BY JOHN KOVALIC
CLAIRE? WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S...IT'S MAXWELL. I THINK HE'S HAVING AN AFFAIR!
MAXWELL? NO!
HE'S BEEN COMING HOME LATE...WITH NO EXPLANATION...
EGASAURU GAMES
THAT COULD BE ANYTHING, THOUGH...
THE SAME NIGHTS EVERY WEEK? AND HE'S BEING SECRETIVE AND DISTANT. I EVEN TRY AND BREAK OUT SOME BEER-AND-PRETZEL GAMES, BUT WE NEVER PLAY!
NO!
AND IT GETS WORSE! WHEN HE'S HOME, HE'S NOT TAKING ANY INTEREST IN HIS NINTH-LEVEL MAGE ANYMORE...
HOLY COW! YOU'RE RIGHT! HE'S GOT TO BE CHEATING ON YOU! HE'S...HE'S...
NO!
YES! HE'S...
...SEEING ANOTHER GAMING GROUP!
KOVALIC
SOB OH, MAXWELL...MAXWELL... DON'T TAKE YOUR DICE TO TOWN...

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SNEAKY, STEALTHY, & STYLISH

New Magic Items for Assassins, Rogues, and Bards

by Richard Farrese · illustrated by Mike May

Amulet of Good Fortune

Bracers of Blocking

Fey Flute

Perhaps more than any other characters, bards and rogues take great pride in their skills and abilities. When it comes to using their skills, most of these heroes rely on what they refer to as the tools of the trade. Whether they need to defend themselves, disarm a deadly trap, or charm an audience, most professionals rely on a number of tools to make a decent (or indecent) living.

Armors

Most rogues prefer not to wear armor, allowing them to stay light on their feet and as nimble as possible, but the dangers of the adventuring life often incite them to don protective garments. The following items both provide protection and fit the ideals of the stealthy professions.

Armor of the Woodland: The elves of ancient times constructed these armors from the leaves and bark of birches, oaks, and maples. Few elven craftsmen remember how to make these garments today, and fewer still actually fashion them. The origin of these strange and supple armors is unknown, but legends hold that the elven gods revealed the secret of their making to their children. Legends also say that the warriors of the first elven armies wore such suits of armor and that they became known for their uncanny ability to ambush any opponent who journeyed through their forest homes. Whether these stories are true or not, these light suits are extraordinarily well fashioned, and many druids, rangers, and rogues cherish them.

Shaped in the form of a leather vest, a suit of *armor of the woodland* comes complete with shoulder pads, elbow protectors, and greaves. The armor, which is almost as light as a wool shirt, looks like a jumbled pile of crushed leaves, broken branches, and thin pieces of bark. The most common of these suits are of a dark green color, but shades can vary from bright reds and oranges to pale yellows and greens.

Armor of the woodland is a suit of *+3 leather armor*. Whenever the wearer of such a suit of armor travels through a forest, he adds 10 feet to his base land speed and gains the trackless step ability of druids. The armor's most impressive power allows its wearer to enter trees and magically transport from one to another three times per day. This ability works just like the *tree stride* spell as cast by a 9th-level druid.

Moderate conjuration; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, woodland stride ability or *pass without trace, tree stride;* Price: 75,755 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

Armor of the Woodland

Bracers of Blocking: Forged in times long forgotten, these sturdy iron bracers come in various shapes and sizes. Usually found in the burial chambers of kings, knights, and other great warriors, these items appear as nothing more than well-crafted but bulky bracers. A closer examination, however, reveals a pair of *bracers of blocking* as unnaturally light and carved with the shape of a tiny shield inside each bracer. Wearers barely feel these magic bracers, and they do not hamper dexterity the way other pieces of armor do. Usually forged with gold, silver, or mithral inlays representing armored animals, legendary beasts known for their toughness, or coats of arms, most *bracers of blocking* appear to be very valuable.

Bracers of blocking provide a +2 armor bonus to Armor Class. In addition, whenever the wearer fights defensively or uses the total defense standard action, he gains an additional +2 dodge bonus to his Armor Class.

Faint conjuration and transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace, mage armor;* Price: 7,000 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

WEAPONS

Many rogues, assassins, bards, and diplomats prefer to use small weapons they can easily hide. Whether they want to sneak a blade past the king's elite bodyguards or simply wish to appear defenseless, a variety of magical weapons are fashioned especially for such situations.

Dagger of Torment: Forged in the days of Rakaltha the Vile, one of history's most notorious assassins, an unknown smith of a fallen empire created these dark blades. In Rakaltha's time, the thieves, thugs, and murderers of the world sought out and cherished these daggers. Few of these blades remain, as many heroes of the past worked to destroy the majority of these terrible weapons. However, it is possible that a master smith has uncovered the secrets behind the creation of these blades, as they have recently begun appearing with startling regularity.

A *dagger of torment* has a long, thin serrated blade made of an unknown ebon alloy. The weapon has no hand guard, but strips of blood-red leather woven in a tight pattern cover its handle. Both the metal of the blade and the leather wrapped around its

Dagger of Torment

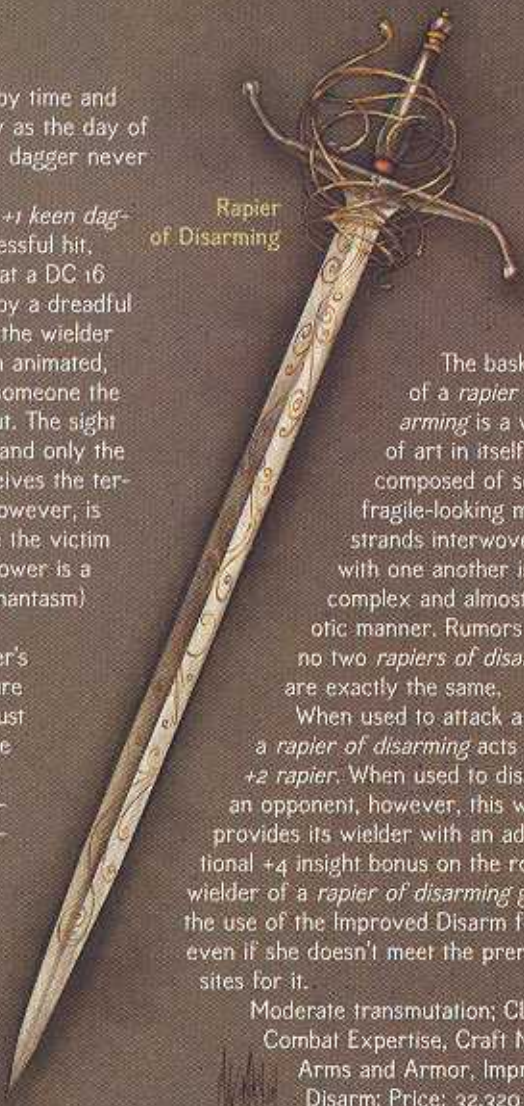
handle seem unaffected by time and remain as beautiful today as the day of the dagger's forging. The dagger never needs sharpening.

This weapon acts as a *+1 keen dagger*, but with every successful hit, the victim must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or be afflicted by a dreadful vision. This vision makes the wielder of the blade appear as an animated, rotting corpse, often of someone the victim cares greatly about. The sight lasts only for a moment, and only the wounded character perceives the terrible image. The vision, however, is powerful enough to make the victim dazed for 1 round. This power is a mind-affecting illusion (phantasm) fear effect.

Once per day, the dagger's wielder can curse a creature dazed by it. The wielder must decide to activate the curse ability after he has made a successful hit with the dagger and after he has determined if the daze effect has affected the victim. Victims of this curse are plagued with flashbacks of the visions they experienced from the dagger, causing them to take a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks. The curse can be lifted as per *bestow curse*. Creatures immune to the *dagger of torment's* daze ability are also immune to its *bestow curse* ability.

Moderate illusion; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bestow curse, keen edge, phantasmal killer*; Price: 109,100 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

Rapier of Disarming: Narcil the Bloodthirsty, a legendary duelist who became an expert weaponsmith in his old age, fashioned these beautifully crafted blades. Crafted for his children—whom Narcil wanted to protect, despite his moniker—most of these extraordinary rapiers were made of a special alloy composed of white gold mixed with iron, mithral, and yellow gold. Strands of precious metals, like a myriad of capillary veins, run along the length of these elegant blades. Ironically, Narcil is better known today for the extraordinarily beautiful weapons he forged than for his ability to wield such blades.



Rapier of Disarming

The basket hilt of a *rapier of disarming* is a work of art in itself, often composed of several fragile-looking metal strands interwoven with one another in a complex and almost chaotic manner. Rumors say no two *rapiers of disarming* are exactly the same.

When used to attack a foe, a *rapier of disarming* acts as a *+2 rapier*. When used to disarm an opponent, however, this weapon provides its wielder with an additional +4 insight bonus on the roll. The wielder of a *rapier of disarming* gains the use of the Improved Disarm feat, even if she doesn't meet the prerequisites for it.

Moderate transmutation; CL 12th; Combat Expertise, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Improved Disarm; Price: 32,320 gp; Weight: 3 lb.

Sap of Stunning: These weapons date back to a time when vast city-states dominated the land. As the cities grew, law enforcement became a major problem until the ruler of one such city-state commissioned a group of artisans to create weapons that allowed city guards to capture criminals uninjured.

After the fall of the city-states, there was a time when every guild master of an unlawful organization—particularly thieves' guilds—purchased these items by the handful. Today, very few professional culprits take as much care not to harm their marks, but those who hear about *saps of stunning* pay dearly to acquire one.

This ordinary looking sap is twice as heavy as its mundane counterpart. Usually made from a dark gray, brown, or black leather sack filled with crushed rock, most bounty hunters and lawmen tasked to bring living prisoners to justice consider *saps of stunning*

Sap of Stunning

priceless. Burglars, thieves, and good-hearted bandits who prefer to avoid doing permanent harm to their victims also cherish these items.

A *sap of stunning* is a *+2 ki focus sap* that deals 2d6 points of nonlethal damage with a successful hit.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor; Price: 32,301 gp; Weight: 5 lb.

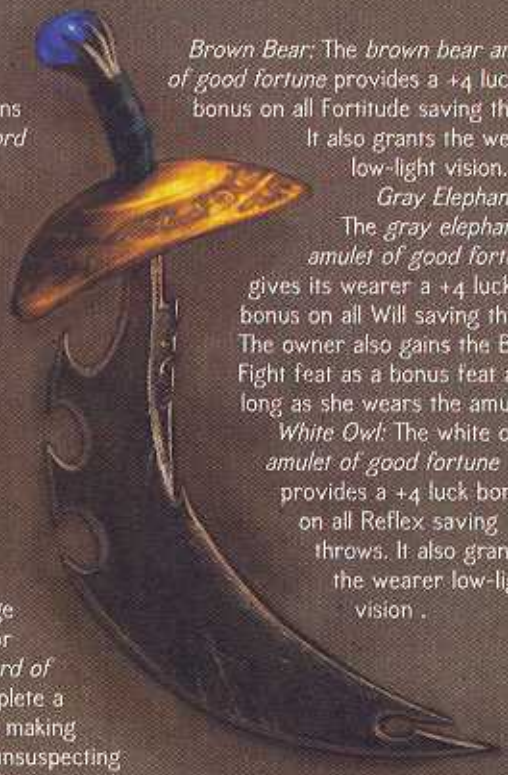
Sword of Murder: Although many believe Narcil the Bloodthirsty fashioned them, the dwarven smith Karmas of the Jagged Hammer clan actually invented these vile weapons for a rich assassins' guild. Shortly after their making, Karmas disappeared, and he was never seen again. Some sages hold that Karmas the Smith was murdered by one of the dark blades he forged, while others maintain that he escaped to avoid the authorities of the dwarven king who suspected his involvement with the evil guild.

Massive bronze hilts in the shape of a crescent moon identify these elegantly crafted scimitars. Made from bronze, silver, and iron, *swords of murder* are extremely hard to find, and the few smiths who know the secret of their making zealously guard it. The blades of these swords are broad but extremely thin and sharp, as was the fashion at the time of their creation. The crescent-shaped guard is wide, with many strange runes engraved into the bronze alloy. The handle is made of the same material as the rest of the weapon, but dark blue or green

silk most often covers it. The pommel holds a tear-shaped sapphire, which burns brightly every time the *sword of murder* takes a life.

A *sword of murder* is a *+1 scimitar* that gets its name from its special ability. Whenever the sword is used to kill a creature with at least a 3 Intelligence that does not view the wielder as an enemy (the victim has an attitude of indifferent or better toward the wielder immediately prior to the wielder's attack), the sword deals an additional +2d6 points of damage with every successful hit for the next 24 hours. The *sword of murder's* wielder must complete a murder within 10 rounds of making his first attack against the unsuspecting victim to gain the benefit of the sword's additional damage.

Moderate necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *death knell*; Price: 18,310 gp; Weight: 3 lb.



Sword of Murder

WONDROUS ITEMS

Whether they need to disarm a deadly trap, pick a lock, or charm an audience with their musical talents, most professional scoundrels rely on a number of instruments to make a decent living. The following are examples of magic items particularly well suited to the needs of such individuals.

Amulet of Good Fortune: These trinkets come from an ancient tribal people who inhabited most of what folk now consider civilized lands. A tribe calling itself the Karalkata, which in its tongue meant "Children of the Earth," believed that all living things were born from the earth. Although it is not known how these people ceased to exist, a good number of relics survived their decline and fall. The druids who led the Karalkata created some of the most powerful trinkets, and the *amulets of good fortune* are one of the most cherished treasures handed down from the ancient tribesmen.

These small wooden amulets come in three distinct shapes: a brown bear, a gray elephant, and a white owl. Each of the three shapes demonstrates a particular set of distinct abilities.

Brown Bear: The *brown bear amulet of good fortune* provides a +4 luck bonus on all Fortitude saving throws. It also grants the wearer low-light vision.

Gray Elephant: The *gray elephant amulet of good fortune* gives its wearer a +4 luck bonus on all Will saving throws. The owner also gains the Blind-Fight feat as a bonus feat as long as she wears the amulet.

White Owl: The white owl *amulet of good fortune* provides a +4 luck bonus on all Reflex saving throws. It also grants the wearer low-light vision .

Strong abjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *bear's endurance (brown bear), bull's strength (gray elephant), cat's grace (white owl)*; Price: 27,000 gp; Weight: —.

Brooch of Alertness: These simple-looking brooches are composed of a tiny ivory sculpture set within a silver frame. The sculpture depicts the face of a human-like female bearing several animal features such as tiny horns, pointed ears, and long fangs protruding from an open mouth. The figure's wide-open eyes shine with a pale red light in darkness. This strange inner light is not strong enough to illuminate an area.

Brooch of Alertness

Legend holds that an ancient deity of nature who died long ago gave these strange jewels to mankind. Some believe the ivory on the brooch was actually carved in the image of this god. Whether or not these stories are true, *brooches of alertness* are especially useful to those who rely on their wits to survive, as well as to those whose professions often force them to travel in the dark.

A *brooch of alertness* grants its wearer a +4 insight bonus on all Listen, Search, Spot, and Survival skill checks. As long as its owner wears the brooch, she gains low-light vision and 60-foot darkvision.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, Alertness, *darkvision*; Price: 39,600 gp; Weight: —.

Drum of the Shadow Hound: An ancient people now long forgotten created these heavy drums, but the secret of fashioning these instruments survives to this day. Traditionally, *drums of the shadow hound* were carved from the trunk of palm and acajou trees found in the lands of their original creation. More recently, artisans fashioning these magic items have used the wood from oaks, olive trees, and thick maples. The two other elements required for the construction of a *drum of the shadow hound*, however, have not changed. Like the artisans of old, modern craftsmen still use the treated skin of a shadow mastiff as the head of the drum, as no other pelt will do. The drum's most important element, however, is the long strands of woven shadow mastiff vocal cords used to tighten the skin upon the drum. These treated strands require a special alchemical solution to create. Once treated, the item's creator must slowly stretch them for at least one month before he can use them for this purpose.

The body of a *drum of the shadow hound* is usually dark brown or black, with occasional hints of burgundy or dark orange. The vocal cords tightening the skin are usually deep purple in color and cover a good portion of the side of the cylindrical drum. The instrument's skin is always pitch black with flecks of deep purple, like a shadow mastiff's pelt.

To activate the power of a *drum of the shadow hound*, a character simply has to play it, using a standard action to do so. Regardless of how many taps on the drum are required to activate an ability, a user can only use one ability per round. By tapping the

appropriate number of times upon it, a *drum of the shadow hound* confers the following powers.

One Tap–Deeper Darkness: This ability functions as the spell of the same name, with the area of effect centered upon the drum. The drummer can end this effect at any time by tapping once more upon the drum. This power is usable up to three times per day.

Two Taps–Shadow Blend: In any conditions other than full daylight (or the *daylight* spell), the shadow blending power grants the drum's user the effect of the *greater invisibility* spell. Such bright conditions reveal the drummer, although the effect does not end, and the drummer can become invisible again simply by moving out of the lighted area. The drummer may choose to cancel this power at any time before it expires by tapping twice more upon the drum's skin. The shadow blending ability may be activated twice each day.

Three Taps–Summon Shadow Mastiff: This ability, useable once per day, functions as an extended *summon monster V* spell as cast by an 11th level sorcerer, except it only summons a shadow mastiff.

Four Taps–Fearful Baying: Tapping four times upon the skin activates the *drum of the shadow hound's* greatest power, useable twice per day. The instrument imitates the terrible baying sound of a shadow mastiff, creating an effect that functions as the *fear* spell, except that all evil outsiders and the drum's owner are immune to the effect. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, fear effect.

Moderate conjuration; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *deeper darkness, fear, greater invisibility, summon monster V;* Market Price: 166,000 gp; Weight: 6 lb.

Fey Flute: Created by the druids of the Karalkata tribe, these magic flutes are carved from the bones of nixies, nymphs, pixies, or satyrs. Although made thousands of years ago and extremely rare, some of these instruments are still in use today.

The body of a *fey flute* is slightly curved, 1 inch in diameter, and approximately 18 inches long. Many strange runes are carved upon the yellowed bone, which holds twenty pipe holes. When played, a delicate and sweet sound emanates from the instrument. A competent performer can produce wonderful melodies using such a flute.

Fey flutes come in four different varieties and their powers vary according to the type of creature from which they were made. All *fey flutes* have the following abilities in common, however. As masterwork musical instruments, these flutes grant the usual +2 circumstance bonus on Perform checks involving their use. When someone uses a fey flute, he automatically gains an additional +5 insight bonus on all Perform checks made with the instrument.

Nixie Bone Flute: Fashioned from the bone of a nixie, this flute allows the wielder to cast *charm person* three times per day. Creatures who succeed at a DC 11 Will save are unaffected by the flute's power. In addition, the owner can also cast *water breathing* once per day.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, Perform 7 ranks, *charm person, water breathing;* Price: 17,335 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

Nymph Bone Flute: A *fey flute* carved from the bone of a nymph has a number of powers. Three times per day, the wielder can play the flute and cause a target to become blind, as the *blindness/deafness* spell. The target creature must succeed at a DC 13 Fortitude save to resist the effect. Once per day, the wielder can gain unearthly grace as he plays, as if affected by the *eagle's splendor* spell.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, Perform 5 ranks, *blindness/deafness, eagle's splendor;* Price: 13,557 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

Pixie Bone Flute: Three times per day, the user of a *pixie bone flute* can create a *greater invisibility* effect on himself, as per the spell.

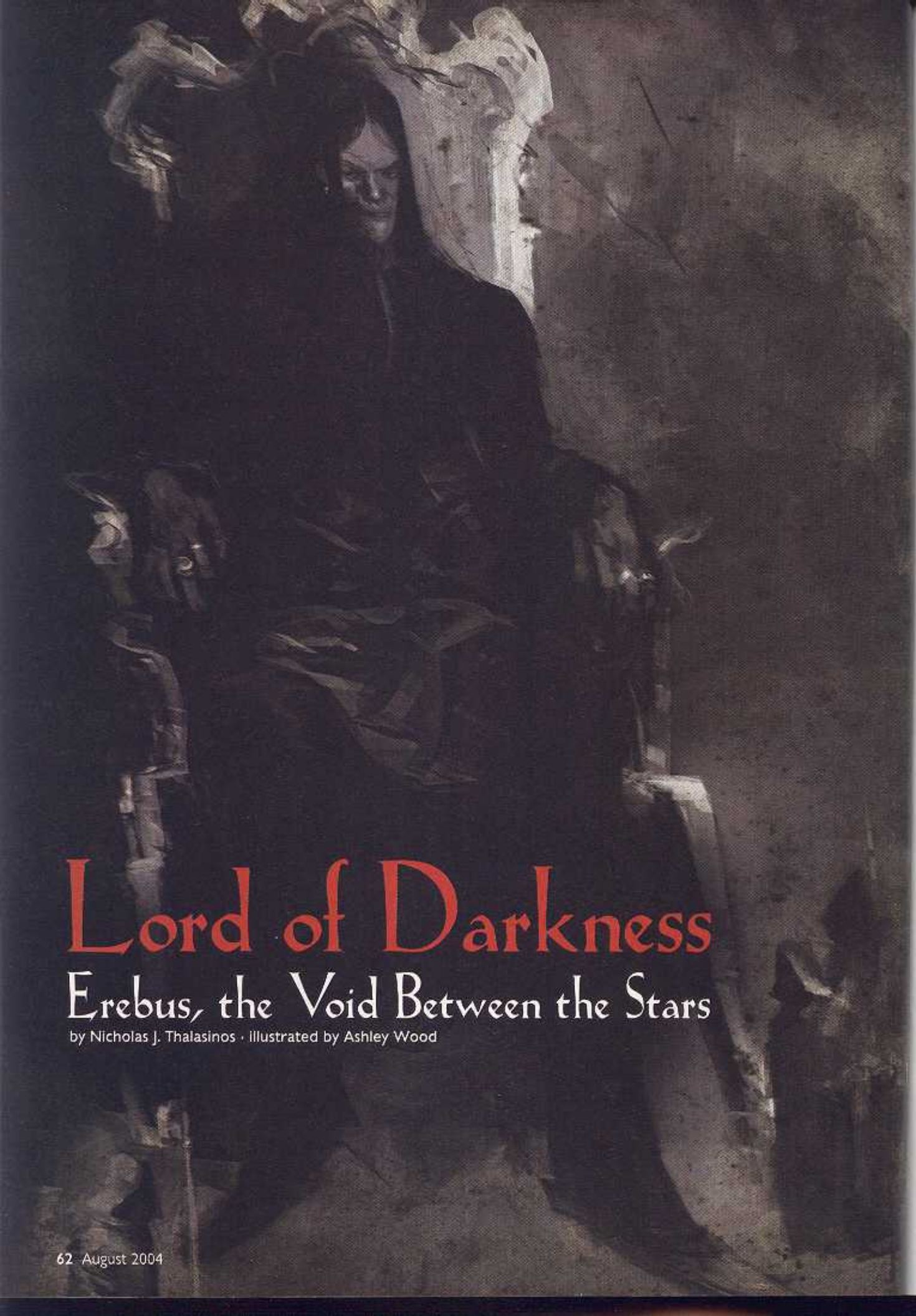
Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, Perform 9 ranks, *greater invisibility;* Price: 34,030 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

Satyr Bone Flute: Made from the bone of a satyr, this *fey flute* bestows great insight to the musician, who learns how to weave impressive magical melodies with this instrument. When he so chooses, the user of the *satyr bone flute* may cast *cause fear, charm person,* or *sleep,* as per the spells. Each of these effects may be used once per day. Satyrs are unaffected by the flute's power. These powers are sonic, mind-affecting effects.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, Perform 4 ranks, *cause fear, charm person, sleep;* Price: 7,460 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

Drum of the Shadow Hound

Craftsmen still use the treated skin of a shadow mastiff as the head of the drum, as no other pelt will do.



Lord of Darkness

Erebus, the Void Between the Stars

by Nicholas J. Thalasinos · Illustrated by Ashley Wood

In the cracks between the floorboards, in the vast depths of the Underdark, and in the nothingness between the stars, there exists a lurking darkness. For many, this tenebrous void is merely the absence of light and a place not suitable for normal mortal life. Yet, those who remember a time before creation know that perpetual nothingness has a face with eyes that jealously watch the thriving world, and that face has a name: Erebus.

THE HISTORY OF DARKNESS

Erebus is an ancient being—perhaps one of the first gods. It is known that his realm was the Material Plane when it was nothing but a vast emptiness, a realm of endless void that he exulted in. When the other gods fashioned the worlds, Erebus took offense, as they decided to use his realm as their foundation, effectively ruining his empty paradise with their creations. Relocating in disgust to the newly formed Plane of Shadow, Erebus watched the creations of the other gods grow and flourish, spreading their taint of existence to all corners of the multiverse. Hateful of the other gods as much as their works, he aspires to bring about the fall of all other gods and every mortal race and world, returning the planes to the emptiness he once reveled in.

EREBUS

Devourer of Light, King of Shadows, Lord of Darkness, the Void Between the Stars
Lesser Deity
Symbol: A horned arch
Home Plane: The Plane of Shadow
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Portfolio: Darkness, lies, night, shadows
Worshippers: Assassins, liars, shadar-kai*, thieves, undead
Cleric Alignments: CE, NE, LE
Domains: Darkness (from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*), Evil, Trickery
Favored Weapons: "Shadow Lash" (whip)
*Shadar-kai are described in the *Fiend Folio*.

Erebus is a selfish and uncaring god who hates the light and desires to see all worlds returned to the lifelessness of a never-ending night. From his temple-palace on the Plane of Shadow, he makes grand and wild schemes to fulfill his improbable goal, expending legions of servants on even the most impossible plots. Although his decadence and pride make it unlikely that he will ever see his dreams fulfilled, his cultists are zealous fanatics, and his power upon the Plane of Shadow (the entirety of which he considers his domain) is nearly unmatched.

Erebus has few worshipers on the Material Plane. Those who serve him there congregate in secretive cults, usually in places of primeval darkness, such as the Underdark's deepest depths. From there they seek ways to gain their god's favor, such as attacking the worshippers of gods of light, destroying races that delight in the daylight, and even plotting ways to extinguish the sun. Many of Erebus's worshippers serve him on the Plane of Shadow. Summoning them to his domain with promises of immortal rewards, his worshippers find themselves trapped on the Plane of Shadow, serving for the rest of their lives and then after death within Erebus's bleak estate.

Worshippers of Erebus pray for spells at midnight, always in the darkest location available. Many clerics of Erebus multiclass as assassins, rogues, shadow apostles, shadowdancers, or sorcerers, although other multiclass combinations are known.

GOALS

Erebus is an ancient being and flaunts his timelessness over younger gods and their creations, offering all other creatures nothing but disdain. Even Erebus's worshippers are not immune to their god's scorn, as he sees them as nothing more than rightfully willing slaves. The Devourer of the Light seeks to regain the cold comfort he enjoyed when the entire Material Plane was merely a endless void. Although he realizes that the other gods would never allow him to act directly against their worlds, he sends legions of his servants and worshippers to sabotage their work.

Prideful despite his cunning, Erebus rarely tasks his worshippers with specific goals but promises great rewards to those who gain his favor. As such, his worshippers wage a subtle war against the gods of light and each other, trying to outstrip all others to gain their god's attentions. Although this leads to a great deal of infighting among Erebus's cultists, it also means that only the most cunning and ruthless survive.

Erebus rarely takes direct action, only doing so when an opportunity to plunge an entire race or world into darkness arises. Such instances are of course few and far between, but great urgency sometimes leaves mortals vulnerable to the King of Shadows' dark plots. A perfect example exists in the shadar-kai, an entire race that tried to utilize Erebus's power but were ensnared by the specifics of their bargain. The shadar-kai are now afflicted by what they call the shadow curse and are invariably being drawn into the Plane of Shadow where Erebus has taken the entire race as his favored slaves.

EREBUS'S SERVANTS

Many monstrosities draw their power from the darkness or at least partially consist of living shadow, although not all of these creatures are directly related to Erebus or his wild machinations, such creatures might find the worship of the King of Shadows beneficial to their goals.

Dark Ones: Dark ones have always revered the darkness and are mysteriously claimed by it upon their deaths. Although the secret of their strange religion has long baffled sages, Erebus could be the face behind the dark ones' nameless adoration. Dark ones appear on page 37 of the *Fiend Folio*. See also the "Ecology of the Dark Ones" in this issue.

Darkweaver: Alien horrors cloaked in darkness and with the power to manipulate shadows, darkweavers are among the most fearful and cunning predators of the Plane of Shadow. Although these aberrations have little to gain from worshipping Erebus, the Lord of Darkness and his worshipers might bargain with these creatures to retain their services as assassins and guardians.

Darkweavers appear on page 39 of the *Fiend Folio*.

Nightshades: Among the most powerful of all undead, nightshades of all aspects often share the same goals as Erebus: Expand the realm of darkness and slay the living. As such, Erebus's worshippers often ally themselves with nightshades of all types, sometimes even worshipping them as aspects of Erebus. Nightshades appear on page 195 of the *Monster Manual*.

Shadar-Kai: These shadow fey suffer from a debilitating curse that gradually drags them into the Plane of Shadow. Although only the shadar-kai know for sure, rumors suggest that Erebus is the source of this foul affliction, enforcing it upon the entire race as payment for a centuries-old bargain. As all shadar-kai eventually succumb to the shadow curse and are drawn into Erebus' service, the entire race hates the ancient god of shadows for tricking them. Shadar-kai are found on page 150 of the *Fiend Folio*.

Shades: Shades are mortals infused with the vital essence of the Plane of Shadow. With the darkness Erebus holds dominion over making up their bodies and coursing through their veins, many shades pay homage to the Void Between the Stars. Shades appear on page 314 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*.

Shadows: Creatures of undead darkness, shadows prey upon the living. These two simple traits make them appealing servants for Erebus, and his worshippers employ shadows more than any other type of undead. Shadows are on page 221 of the *Monster Manual*.

Shadow Creatures: Countless creatures, both natural and unnatural, are native to the Plane of Shadow and thus fall under Erebus's dominion. Most notable and dangerous are the deadly shadow asps and fearful shadow mastiffs, but virtually any creature can be infused with the essence of shadow. Shadow asps can be found on page 152 of the *Fiend Folio*, shadow mastiffs appear on page 222 of the *Monster Manual*, and the shadow creature template appears on page 190 of the *Manual of the Planes*.

Shadow Demons: Perhaps Erebus's favored servants, these are creatures of pure maliciousness and deepest shadow. Cunning, stealthy, and destructive monsters, the Lord of Darkness coxes as many of these demons from the Abyss as possible. With their propensity for gathering souls, Erebus usually sends shadow demons to track down those who have wronged him or worshippers who have fallen out of his favor.

USING GODS BESIDES EREBUS

Erebus's history and goals are left purposefully vague so DMs can insert the King of Shadows into their campaigns with relative ease. However, if your campaign already has a god that fills the same roles as Erebus, the details of his servants can be adapted to suit another deity. In other words, shadow apostles, darkness pseudo-elementals, and the other aspects of Erebus's worship could suit a number of different gods.

The Core D&D Pantheon: From the gods presented in the *Player's Handbook*, Nerull and Vecna are most likely to have followers akin to Erebus's. Members of the expanded pantheon presented in the *Complete Divine*, most notably Iuz, Tharizdun, and Xan Yae, might also adopt aspects of Erebus's worship.

Eberron: Among the pantheons of Eberron, Erebus's servants are most akin to the worshippers of the Dark Six, and the Shadow most notably among them. It is also possible that the Cults of the Dragon Below might focus on powers of darkness similar to those Erebus favors.

Forgotten Realms: Numerous Forgotten Realms deities favor the darkness and hold similar portfolios as Erebus, most notably the goddess Shar. To a lesser degree, the deities Cyric and Mask also prefer the darkness, but focus more on the foul dealings that take place within the shadows. Among the other cultures and races of the Realms, the drow deity Vhaeraun, the dwarf god Abbathor, the elven deities Fenmarel Mestarine and Sehanine Moonbow, the gnome deity Urdlen, the halfling god Brandobaris, the Mulhorandi deity Set, or the orc god Shargaas might also have similar goals, portfolios, and servants as Erebus.

The Olympian Pantheon: Although it is unlikely that any other deities of this pantheon would have worshippers similar to Erebus, these gods deserve special note as Erebus is in fact drawn from among their ranks. An ancient being even by the gods' standards, Erebus is classically known as the embodiment of darkness and the father of the better-known mythological characters Charon, Eros, and the Fates. Why Erebus has few dealings with the other deities of his pantheon could stem from his hatred of their creation, that they imprisoned him like the Titans, or whatever other reason the DM chooses.

INTRODUCING EREBUS INTO YOUR CAMPAIGN

Erebus's mysterious nature makes it easy to introduce him as a god or other significant extraplanar power in nearly any campaign. With minimal effort, any DM interested in expanding upon the mysteries and plots of the Void Between the Stars should be able to include him in ongoing campaigns.

Being that Erebus's worshippers dwell in shadow and strive not to draw attention to themselves, they prefer to manipulate other groups or creatures to their own ends. Thus, characters could find that enemies they've been battling for an entire campaign have actually been puppets of Erebus's goals.

A delve into the Underdark or encounter with creatures from the depths below could also bring PCs into contact with Erebus. As his worship is more common among creatures that shun the light, derro, drow, or another race of evil Underdark creatures could serve or promote the goals of the King of Shadows.

Characters who travel to the Plane of Shadow venture directly into the realm of Erebus. Whether they merely find the taint of his worshippers working his will or come across his palace of darkness, Erebus's influence is felt more directly on this shadowy plane.

An encounter with the shadar-kai (see the *Fiend Folio*) could also spark a series of adventures involving Erebus. These shadow fey could trick the PCs into working with them to break their centuries- long affliction.

These suggestions are only a few ways Erebus might find a place in an ongoing campaign. DMs should feel free to alter the specifics of Erebus and his servants to fit their campaign worlds as seamlessly as possible.

Shadow demons appear on page 173 of the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

Shadow Dragons: Some of the most cunning and powerful creatures with ties to the Plane of Shadow, shadow dragons sometimes have schemes that parallel those of the Lord of Darkness. Erebus and his worshipers must deal with shadow dragons on an individual basis, but when Erebus enlists these wyrms to aid his plots, his minions become nearly unstoppable. It is said that on the few occasions that Erebus leaves his palace, he is accompanied by a great wyrm shadow dragon called Nightfall. Shadow dragons appear on page 191 of the *Draconomicon*.

SHADOW APOSTLES

Some beings are embraced by the shadow. In the soothing darkness come whispers promising their deepest desires, immortal gifts offered for a price of eternal loyalty. For the opportunity to work against the world of light that so scorns and scorches them, it is a price most gladly pay. These creatures, beloved and enslaved by the darkness, are members of Erebus's shadowy fold. Greatest among them are his shadow apostles, spellcasters who have learned to harness the power of darkness. Great power lies hidden in darkness, waiting for those willing to explore the dark road.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the shadow apostle prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Shadow apostles gain no additional proficiency with any weapon or armor.

Spells Per Day/Spells Known: Every level of shadow apostle grants new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if the character had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the level of shadow apostle. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means that he adds the level of shadow apostle to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly.

Dark Spell Focus: At 1st level, a shadow apostle gains the ability to cast spells with the darkness descriptor or of the shadow subschool as if he had the Spell Focus feat applying to those spells. Add +1 to the Difficulty Class for all spells with the darkness descriptor or of the shadow subschool.

Summon Darkness Pseudo-Elemental (Su): Once per day, a shadow apostle can summon a darkness pseudo-elemental. The pseudo-elemental obeys all of the shadow apostle's commands to the best of its ability for a number of hours equal to the character's shadow apostle level. At 1st level, a shadow apostle using this ability summons one small darkness pseudo-elemental. At 3rd level, this ability becomes more potent, summoning a medium darkness pseudo-elemental. At 5th level, this ability reaches its full strength, placing a large darkness pseudo-elemental under the shadow apostle's control.

Low-light Vision (Su): At 2nd level, a shadow apostle gains low-light vision, allowing him to see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, or similar conditions of poor illumination. If the character already has low-light vision this ability grants him no additional benefit.

Shadow Resistance (Ex): By 2nd level, a shadow apostle is intimately familiar with the workings of darkness- and shadow-related spells. The character now gains a bonus equal to his shadow apostle level on all saving throws made to resist the effects of spells with the darkness descriptor or from the shadow subschool.

Darkvision (Su): At 3rd level, a shadow apostle gains darkvision up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but is otherwise like normal sight, and allows the character to function with no light at all. Shadow apostles that already have darkvision at the same or a farther range gain no benefit from this ability.

Shadow Blend (Su): By 4th level, a shadow apostle has become attuned to the cool darkness of shadows. Whenever a shadow apostle is within an area of shadowy illumination, his form blurs slightly into the surrounding darkness, granting him total concealment. Darkvision foils this concealment unless the shadowy illumination is from a magical or supernatural source, such as the *darkness* spell. *True seeing* also negates the benefit of this ability.

SHADOW APOSTLE REQUIREMENTS

Hit Die: D8

To qualify to become a shadow apostle, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-good.

Patron Deity: Erebus.

Skills: Hide 4 ranks, Spellcraft 8 ranks.

Spells: The ability to cast 3rd-level arcane or divine spells, including at least three spells with the darkness descriptor or shadow subschool descriptor.

SHADOW APOSTLE CLASS SKILLS

The shadow apostle's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

SHADOW APOSTLE ADVANCEMENT

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day/Spells Known
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Dark spell focus, summon darkness pseudo-elemental (small)	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Low-light vision, shadow resistance	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Summon darkness pseudo-elemental (medium)	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Darkvision, shadow blend	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Summon darkness pseudo-elemental (large)	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

	Darkness Pseudo-Elemental, Small Small Elemental (Extraplanar, Incorporeal)	Darkness Pseudo-Elemental, Medium Medium Elemental (Extraplanar, Incorporeal)	Darkness Pseudo-Elemental, Large Large Elemental (Extraplanar, Incorporeal)
Hit Dice:	2d8 (9 hp)	4d8+8 (26 hp)	8d8+24 (60 hp)
Initiative:	+4	+5	+6
Speed:	Fly 40 ft. (perfect) (8 squares)	Fly 40 ft. (perfect) (8 squares)	Fly 40 ft. (perfect) (8 squares)
Armor Class:	12 (+1 size, +1 deflection), touch 12, flat-footed 12	14 (+1 Dex, +3 deflection) touch 14, flat-footed 13	16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 deflection), touch 16, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple:	+1/–	+3/–	+6/–
Attack:	Incorporeal touch +2 melee (1d4 plus 1d4 cold)	Incorporeal touch +4 melee (1d6 plus 1d6 cold)	Incorporeal touch +7 melee (2d6 plus 2d6 fire)
Full Attack:	Incorporeal touch +2 melee (1d4 plus 1d4 cold)	Incorporeal touch +4 melee (1d6 plus 1d6 cold)	2 incorporeal touches +7 melee (2d6 plus 2d6 cold)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.	10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Shadow mastery, darkness	Shadow mastery, darkness	Shadow mastery, darkness
Special Qualities:	Blindsight 60 ft., blur, elemental traits, incorporeal traits	Blindsight 60 ft., blur, elemental traits, incorporeal traits	Blindsight 60 ft., blur, elemental traits, incorporeal traits
Saves:	Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0	Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +2
Abilities:	Str –, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 13	Str –, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 17	Str –, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 21
Skills:	Listen +2, Spot +3	Listen +3, Spot +4	Listen +7, Spot +8
Feats:	Improved Initiative	Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative	Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative
Environment:	Plane of Shadow	Plane of Shadow	Plane of Shadow
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	3	5	7
Treasure:	None	None	None
Alignment:	Usually neutral evil	Usually neutral evil	Usually neutral evil
Advancement:	3 HD (Small)	5-7 HD (Medium)	9-15 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment:	–	–	–

SPELLS OF SHADOW

Worshippers of Erebus prefer to go unseen and conduct most of their dealings in the darkness. As such, they have created numerous spells that aid them in their clandestine works and give them power over shadows.

SHADOW CURSE

Necromancy [Darkness]

Level: Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell causes the target's natural healing process to be halted by an infusion of shadow essence. Upon casting this spell, the next creature the caster touches is afflicted with the *shadow curse*. Those so cursed suffer no immediate noticeable effects from the spell but soon find they no longer heal as normal. Creatures affected by this spell can only heal naturally or be affected by magic healing while in an area of bright illumination. Spells that heal damage fail if cast upon the creature in an area of shadowy illumination or darkness and natural healing does not occur while in such areas. This curse can be removed by the *break enchantment* or *remove curse* spells.

SHADOW SHIELD

Necromancy [Darkness]

Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (see below)
Spell Resistance: Yes (see below)

This spell surrounds you in a smoky wreathe of flickering darkness that blinds any creature that attacks you in melee.

Any creature that strikes you with a natural weapon, an unarmed attack, or a melee weapon deals normal damage, but must make a Will save or be blinded for a number of rounds equal to your caster level. If the attacker has spell resistance, it applies to this effect.

Material Component: A piece of black paper.

NEW FEAT

Servants of Erebus and other spellcasters who exult in the shadows often summon creatures infused with darkness to serve them. Although these creatures can be forcibly bound or created, some share a more intimate bond with their masters, becoming familiars.

DARKNESS FAMILIAR [GENERAL]

So long as you are able to acquire a new familiar, you may choose a shadow creature from the following nonstandard list as your new familiar.

Prerequisites: Ability to acquire a new familiar, compatible alignment.

Benefit: When choosing a familiar, the following creatures are also available to you. You may choose a familiar with an alignment up to one step away on each of the alignment axes (lawful through chaotic, good through evil). The darkness familiar is magically linked to its master just like a normal familiar. The familiar uses the basic statistics for a creature of its kind as given in the noted book, with these exceptions:

Hit Points: One-half the master's total or the familiar's normal total, whichever is higher.

Attacks: Use the master's base attack bonus or the familiar's base attack bonus, whichever is better. Damage equals that of a normal creature of its kind.

Special Attacks: The familiar has all the special attacks of its kind.

Special Qualities: The familiar has all the special qualities of its kind.

Kind of Familiar	Arcane Spellcaster Level Required
Cloaker	14th
Dark creeper**	10th
Darkenbeast*	12th
Darkness pseudo-elemental, small	7th
Night hunter bat*	5th
Sinister bat*	8th
Shadow	9th
Shadow asp**	6th
Shadow mastiff	14th
Wraith	14th

*From *Monsters of Faerûn*
**From the *Fiend Folio*

Darkness Pseudo-Elementals

Darkness pseudo-elementals are creatures of living darkness, akin to elementals but not formed of any material. Rather, they represent the absence of all light and substance. Although sometimes encountered roaming the primeval darkness of the deepest Underdark caverns, they are more often found in the service of worshippers of Erebus, spreading his shadowy taint and extinguishing light wherever they find it.

The shadows coalesce into a single point of pulsing animate darkness. Trailing smoky wisps of gloom, this vague form moves soundlessly closer, draining the light from all it passes.

Darkness pseudo-elementals are creatures of living shadow. Appearing as nebulous forms of ever-shifting gloom, they can lash out with smoky tendrils as insubstantial as the darkness.

These elusive creatures are only found deep underground in places where light has never touched or when summoned from their homes on the Plane of Shadow. Although not harmed by light, it causes them considerable discomfort, and they do all they can to escape or extinguish the hateful illumination. Shadow pseudo-elementals usually attack other creatures for no other reason than their victims brought light into their domains.

It is unknown whether shadow pseudo-elementals know or understand any languages, as they have never been known to communicate in any manner.

Combat

When confronted with a threat or facing a light-bearing creature, darkness pseudo-elementals lash out with freezing tendrils of absolute darkness that slash the flesh of foes. If possible, they retreat from combat in lighted areas or blot out light sources with their darkness ability to gain the advantages of their shadow mastery power.

Shadow Mastery (Ex): A shadow pseudo-elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls if both it

	Darkness Pseudo-Elemental, Huge Huge Elemental (Extraplanar, Incorporeal)	Darkness Pseudo-Elemental, Greater Huge Elemental (Extraplanar, Incorporeal)	Darkness Pseudo-Elemental, Elder Huge Elemental (Extraplanar, Incorporeal)
Hit Dice:	16d8+64 (136 hp)	21d8+84 (178 hp)	24d8+96 (204 hp)
Initiative:	+8	+9	+10
Speed:	Fly 40 ft. (perfect) (8 squares)	Fly 40 ft. (perfect) (8 squares)	Fly 40 ft. (perfect) (8 squares)
Armor Class:	19 (-2 size, +4 Dex, +7 deflection), touch 19, flat-footed 15	21 (-2 size, +5 Dex, +8 deflection), touch 21, flat-footed 16	23 (-2 size, +6 Dex, +9 deflection), touch 23, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple:	+12/–	+15/–	+18/–
Attack:	Incorporeal touch +15 melee (2d8 plus 2d8 cold)	Incorporeal touch +19 melee (2d8 plus 2d8 cold)	Incorporeal touch +23 melee (2d8 plus 2d8 cold)
Full Attack:	2 incorporeal touches +15 melee (2d8 plus 2d8 cold)	2 incorporeal touches +19 melee (2d8 plus 2d8 cold)	2 incorporeal touches +23 melee (2d8 plus 2d8 cold)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./10 ft.	10 ft./10 ft.	10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Shadow mastery, darkness	Shadow mastery, darkness	Shadow mastery, darkness
Special Qualities:	Blindsight 60 ft., blur, elemental traits, incorporeal traits	Blindsight 60 ft., blur, elemental traits, incorporeal traits	Blindsight 60 ft., blur, elemental traits, Incorporeal traits
Saves:	Fort +9, Ref +16, Will +5	Fort +11, Ref +19, Will +7	Fort +12, Ref +22, Will +10
Abilities:	Str –, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 25	Str –, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 27	Str –, Dex 22, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 29
Skills:	Listen +11, Spot +12	Listen +14, Spot +14	Listen +29, Spot +29
Feats:	Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch)	Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch)	Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch)
Environment:	Plane of Shadow	Plane of Shadow	Plane of Shadow
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	9	11	13
Treasure:	None	None	None
Alignment:	Usually neutral evil	Usually neutral evil	Usually neutral evil
Advancement:	17-20 HD (Huge)	22-23 HD (Huge)	25-48 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment:	–	–	–

and its foe are in an area of darkness or shadowy illumination. While in an area of bright light (such as sunlight or that caused by a *daylight* spell) shadow pseudo-elementals take a -4 penalty on attack and damage rolls. (These modifiers are not included in the statistics block.)

Darkness (Su): Three times per day, a darkness pseudo-elemental can cast *darkness* as a 6th-level sorcerer. A darkness pseudo-elemental with 8 or more Hit Dice casts *deeper darkness* instead of *darkness*, also as a 6th-level sorcerer.

Blindsight (Ex): Shadow pseudo-elementals do not see as other creatures do and can sense objects and creatures within 60 feet without the need for light. Shadow pseudo-elementals usually do not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of their blindsight. See page 306 of the *Monster Manual* for a full description of blindsight.

Blur (Su): Shadow pseudo-elementals have indistinct, constantly shifting forms and are always treated as if they were under the effects of the *blur* spell. This grants the shadow pseudo-elemental concealment, and thus a 20% miss chance. This percentage to miss does not stack with the 50% miss chance provided by its incorporeal subtype. Rather, two separate rolls are made to see if attacks against the pseudo-elemental miss. Creatures that cannot see the pseudo-elemental ignore its concealment, although they suffer the penalties of not being able to see their opponent (see page 151 of the *Player's Handbook*). The *true seeing* spell negates this ability.

by Jason Nelson
illustrated by Marc Sasso

Patterns of

Same Coin, Different Sides

My master has gone away, and now I am left to complete a task I would never have chosen, yet out of love and duty, I will do it all the same. It is my master's will that his magical research be made available to anyone—secrets no more, made plain for every eye to see. He always said wizards keep too many secrets, inviting trouble and suspicion upon themselves. So much knowledge and innovation to advance the Art has been lost by the secrecy of wizards, and their unwillingness to share. His legacy is to be the first lonely candle to illuminate a brighter future of enlightened openness. I still don't agree with this misbegotten notion. The common folk would rather not know the awful secrets we must learn in pursuit of the Art. He might inspire others to do likewise, but I wonder if it's really for the best. Now he's gone and doesn't have to deal with the consequences.

Nevertheless, it is for love that I do this. He worked long and hard at his art, and I will work equally hard to fulfill my oaths and his wishes. I begin where I always felt the most affinity: magics of light and darkness, radiance and shadow. I'm sure he'd appreciate the irony of that choice, shedding light into the dark and shadowy secret places of magic.

—From the journal of Ion Antonescu, advisor and scribe, following the disappearance of his liege, a noted Loremaster.

Light and Shadow Spells

Assassin Spells

2nd-Level Assassin Spells

Ebon Eyes: Subject can see through magical darkness as darkvision.

4th-Level Assassin Spells

Shadow Phase: Subject becomes semi-incorporeal, granting a chance that attacks fail to affect it.

Cleric Spells

2nd-Level Cleric Spells

Ebon Eyes: Subject can see through magical darkness.

4th-Level Cleric Spells

Lightwall: Creates a wall of light that dazzles creatures passing through it.

Lucent Lance: Ray uses ambient light to deal varied amounts of damage and dazzle target.

7th-Level Cleric Spells

Radiant Assault: Light burst deals nonlethal damage and dazes creatures.

Shadow and Light

Magic of light and darkness represents a pair of opposed forces, but in fact they share much in common. Both are concerned with sight and vision, in some cases to improve it and in others to obscure it. The inability to see is a crippling blow in D&D, depriving characters of their Dexterity bonus and rendering them unable to threaten adjacent areas, vulnerable to sneak attacks, and liable to wander off course when moving. Both light and darkness can serve as tools to incapacitate enemies in this way.

Spells using light and darkness show up most commonly in the school of evocation, which the *Player's Handbook* describes as spells that "manipulate energy or tap an unseen source of power." Both also have an affinity for illusion, with light spells most commonly taking the form of patterns or sometimes figments, while darkness spells are more often quasi-real shadow manifestations. Light and darkness magic is sometimes found in the schools of conjuration and abjuration (notably *prismatic wall* and *prismatic sphere*). Thematic elements might link necromancy with darkness, such as the bolts of black energy that act as the signature of spells like *enervation* and *energy drain*, or in some transmutation spells that address concerns about light and darkness, such as *darkvision*. Those similarities, however, are mostly a matter of style or presentation, and it is rare to find spells from these schools directly concerned with light or darkness (although a few such transmutations do appear in this article).

The following spells draw on the powers of light, darkness, or shadow, and they allow characters to incorporate the themes of light or darkness into their repertoire. Dungeon Masters might want to create prestige classes focused on these themes or add these spells as appropriate to the spell lists of existing prestige classes whose interests seem congruent with these flavors of magic.

DRUID SPELLS

4th-Level Druid Spells

Lucent Lance: Ray uses ambient light to deal varied amounts of damage and dazzle target.

SORCERER /WIZARDSPELLS

1st-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Luminous Gaze: Grants a dazzling gaze attack that sheds light.

2nd-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Ebon Eyes: Subject can see through magical darkness as darkvision.

Rainbow Beam: Ray deals a random type of damage.

3rd-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Rainbow Blast: Line deals damage from each type of energy.

4th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Cone of Dimness: Cone temporarily convinces creatures that they are blind.

Lightwall: Creates a wall of light that dazzles creatures passing through it.

Lucent Lance: Ray uses ambient light to deal varied amounts of damage and dazzle target.

Shadow Phase: Subject becomes semi-incorporeal.

7th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Radiant Assault: Light burst deals nonlethal damage and dazes creatures.

Cone of Dimness
Illusion (Phantasm) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 60 ft.
Area: Cone-shaped burst
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell causes a translucent gray cone to burst forth from the caster's outstretched hand. Creatures in the cone must succeed at a Will save or believe darkness has engulfed them, rendering them blind. A blind creature takes a -2 penalty to Armor Class, loses its Dexterity bonus to AC (if any), moves at half speed, and takes a -4 penalty on Search checks and on most Strength- and Dexterity-based skill checks. A creature that makes its initial Will save suffers no ill effects. A creature that fails its initial save can attempt a new saving throw each round until it succeeds or the spell expires. Failing the subsequent saving throws results in continued blindness. Success means the creature feels its vision beginning to clear, although its vision remains dim and hazy for the remainder of the spell. This results in a 20% miss chance for any attack the creature makes.

Ebon Eyes
Transmutation
Level: Assassin 2, Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 min./level
Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)
The subject of this spell gains the ability to see normally in magical darkness and magical shadowy condition, although it does not otherwise improve the subject's ability to see in natural dark or shadowy conditions. While the spell is in effect, a jet-black film covers the subject's eyes, a visual effect that gives the spell its name.

Material Component: A pinch of powdered black gemstone of any type.

Lightwall
Evocation [Light]
Level: Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Wall whose area is up to one 10 ft. square/level or a sphere or hemisphere with a radius of up to 1 ft./level
Duration: 1 min./level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes; see text

This spell causes a wall of dazzling yellow-white light to come into being at any point within range. A *lightwall* sheds light equivalent to a *daylight* spell. The wall is opaque to all creatures except the caster and so grants total concealment to any creature behind it. The caster can see through it without difficulty. A *lightwall* has no physical substance and does not otherwise hinder attacks, movement, or spells passing through it.

A creature that passes through a *lightwall* becomes dazzled for the duration of the spell (a dazzled creature suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls,

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Search checks, and Spot checks). Spell resistance applies when passing through the wall. Sightless creatures and those already dazzled are not affected by passing through the *lightwall*.

Lightwall counters or dispels any darkness spell of equal or lower level, and any darkness spell of equal or higher level counters or dispels it.

Material Component: A pinch of powdered sunstone.

Lucent Lance
Transmutation [Light]
Level: Clr 4, Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Ray
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resi stance: Yes (see below)

This spell causes ambient light to coalesce around the spell focus in the caster's hand and then erupt in a corruscating beam of radiance that lashes out at a single creature or object within range, requiring a ranged touch attack. A creature struck is blinded for 1 round and dazzled for 1 round per level of the caster (a dazzled creature suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls, Search checks, and Spot checks). A creature sensitive to bright light (such as drow, duergar, or kuo-toa) suffers penalties as if it had been exposed to full daylight for 1 round if struck by the beam, even if it resists the spell's other effects.

In addition to this dazzling effect, *lucent lance* deals damage based on the level of light available within the caster's square. In bright light, it deals 1d8 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d8). In shadowy illumination, it deals 1d4 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d4). If no light is present in the caster's square, the spell cannot be cast at all.

Focus: A clear glass or crystal rod.

Luminous Gaze
Evocation [Light]
Level: Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates; see text
Spell Resistance: No

This spell causes the caster's eyes to glow with an unearthly radiance, granting the caster a dazzling gaze attack. The glow from the caster's eyes provides light as per the *light* spell. Each creature within range of the light (20-foot diameter) must attempt a Fortitude saving throw each round at the beginning of its turn. Failure indicates the creature is dazzled for the remainder of the spell's duration (a dazzled creature suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls, Search checks, and Spot checks).

In addition, the caster can concentrate his gaze upon a single creature within range as an attack action, forcing the target of his concentrated gaze to succeed at a Fortitude save or become dazzled for the remainder of the spell's duration.

See page 294 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for a complete description of gaze attacks.

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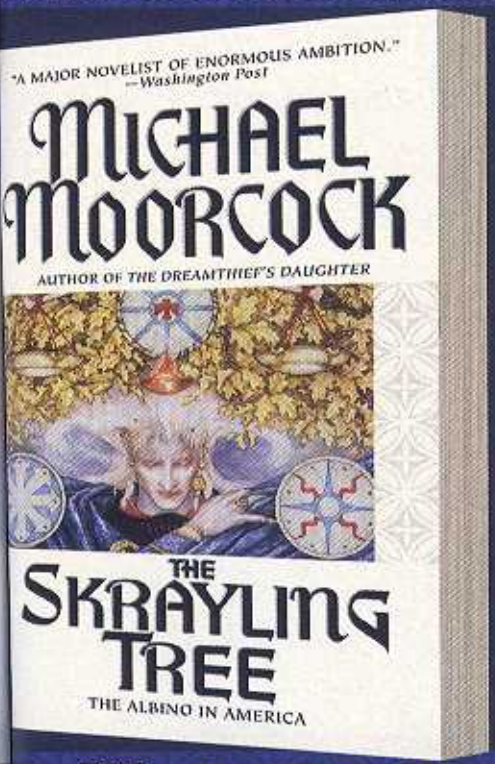

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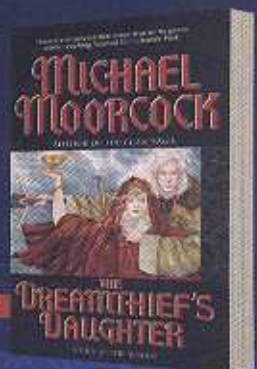

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Radiant Assault

Evocation [Light]
Level: Clr 7, Sor/Wiz 7
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Area: 20 ft. radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell releases energy in the form of a multitude of rainbow-colored beams that erupt in every direction within the area designated by the caster. This kaleidoscopic burst of energy inflicts 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per caster level (maximum 15d6) and dazes all creatures within the burst for 1d6 rounds. Dazed creatures can take no actions but suffer no penalties when being attacked. Those who succeed at a Will save suffer only half normal damage and are dazzled for 1d6 rounds instead (a dazzled creature suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls, Search checks, and Spot checks).

Undead within the area of effect suffer normal damage rather than nonlethal damage and are automatically dazzled (never dazed) regardless of whether or not they succeed at their saving throw.

Focus: An eye from any outsider with 4 or more Hit Dice.

Rainbow Beam

Evocation [Light]
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Ray
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell fires a ray of swirling, multihued light drawn from radiant energies. If the caster succeeds at a ranged touch attack, the target is dazzled for 1 minute (a dazzled creature suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls, Search checks, and Spot checks). The spell also deals 1d8 points of damage plus 1 point per caster level (maximum of +20). The rainbow beam deals a random type of damage as determined by the following table. If two types of energy are indicated, damage is not doubled; instead, *rainbow beam* deals half its damage from each type of energy indicated. Creatures apply energy resistance separately to each type of damage.

1d8	Color	Damage Type
1	red	fire
2	orange	acid
3	yellow	electricity
4	green	piercing damage due to force (force effect)
5	blue	cold
6	indigo	sonic
7	violet	bludgeoning damage due to force (force effect)
8	multihued	roll twice (ignore further results of 8), damage is not doubled

Material Component: A small clear gem or crystal prism worth at least 10 gp.

Rainbow Blast

Evocation [Light]
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 120 ft.
Area: 120-ft. line
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is a wide-spectrum blast of radiant energy composed of all five energy types. *Rainbow blast* deals 1d6 points of damage from each of the five energy types (acid, cold, electricity, fire, and sonic), for a total of 5d6 points of damage. Creatures apply energy resistance separately to each type of damage. Creatures within the area of effect who succeed at a Reflex save suffer only half damage.

Material Component: A small clear gem or crystal prism worth at least 50 gp.

Shadow Phase

Transmutation
Level: Assassin 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell causes the subject's flesh to take on a dark, wispy, insubstantial appearance. This change is not merely cosmetic however, as the spell temporarily transposes some of the subject's tissue with shadow-stuff, making the subject partially incorporeal. This partially incorporeal state does not allow the subject to pass through walls or other solid objects.

This partially incorporeal state causes nonmagical physical attacks against the spell's subject to suffer a 50% chance to fail. Magical attacks, such as supernatural and spell-like abilities, spells, and magic weapons, suffer only a 20% chance to fail to affect the subject of the spell.

Heroes of the War of the Spider Que

by Richard Baker
illustrated by Brom & James Ryman

For better than half a year, the drow have waited in vain for Lolth's Silence to end. War, rebellion, and treachery besiege the sinister cities of the dark elves, and none have survived unscathed. Loyal to their cruel and seductive Spider Queen for thousands of years, even the most zealous of drow harbors doubt and uncertainty in her heart. Disaster is overtaking the Underdark, and the very survival of the dark elves now stands in question.

THE WAR OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

R.A. Salvatore's War of the Spider Queen series relates the story of Lolth's Silence and its repercussions among the dark elves. Lolth has answered no prayers for many months, denying her priestesses the divine magic they formerly used to dominate the cities of their kind. Five volumes of this epic story are now complete: *Dissolution,* by Richard Lee Byers; *Insurrection,* by Thomas Reid; *Condemnation,* by Richard Baker; *Extinction,* by Lisa Smedman; and *Annihilation,* by Philip Athans.

For almost two years now, we've followed the stories of several dark heroes and even darker villains embroiled in the effort to understand Lolth's absence: Pharaun Mizzrym, a Master of Sorcere; Ryld Argith, a Master of Melee-Magthere; Quenthel Baenre, Mistress of Arach-Tinilith; Jeggred, her demonic kinsman; Valas Hune, a captain of the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company; Halisstra Melarn, a survivor of the razed city of Ched Nasad; Danifae Yauntyrr, Halisstra's maidservant; Gromph Baenre, Archmage of Menzoberranzan; Dyrr, the Lichdrow, master of House Agrach Dyrr; and Nimor Imphraezl, the Anointed Blade of the assassin house known as the Jaezred Chaulssin.

Character profiles for Pharaun, Gromph, Quenthel, and Jeggred were detailed in *Dragon* #302, and Dyrr, Valas, Halisstra, and Ryld appeared in *Dragon* #312. This, the final article of the series, profiles Halisstra for a second time, Danifae, and Nimor. All three are original characters created for the series. While Halisstra has appeared previously, this issue shows her after her conversion to the worship of Eillistraee.

The War of the Spider Queen series continues with *Ressurrection,* the sixth and final book in the series by Paul S. Kemp, an April 2005 hardcover release.

Halisstra Melarn, First Daughter of House Melarn

Formerly the eldest daughter of House Melarn in Ched Nasad, Halisstra is now the sole survivor of her House. Her mother reared her to be a future matron, alternately inflicting terrible cruelty on Halisstra and pampering her with lavish gifts. Halisstra studied the secret lore of the Bae'qeshel Telphraezzar, the Whisperers of the Dark Queen, training to honor Lolth with the bard's art as well as the cleric's devotion. This stood her in good stead during Lolth's Silence, since the magic of her bardic powers was not lost when Lolth vanished.

The fall of House Melarn during the destruction of Ched Nasad left Halisstra houseless and vulnerable. She fell in with Quenthel, Pharaun, and the rest of the Menzoberranyr who arrived in Ched Nasad in the last days of the city, and escaped its destruction at their side. Halisstra's adventures alongside Quenthel's company led her across and below Faerûn, as the dark elves quested for an answer to Lolth's Silence. During the course of these

Part III

travels she was captured by surface elves in the forest of Cormanthor, and there she met Seyll Auzkovyn, a priestess of Eillistraee.

Seyll offered Halisstra Eillistraee's message, asking her to give up her evil ways and her worship of the Spider Queen. Halisstra feigned interest just long enough to betray and murder Seyll in order to make her escape from her surface elf captors. Then something unexpected happened. Seyll's faith and the quiet strength of her arguments planted a seed of doubt in Halisstra, a seed that flowered and bore fruit when the quest to reach Lolth in the Demonweb Pits failed and broke Halisstra's faith in the Spider Queen. Halisstra repudiated Lolth and turned her heart to Eilistraee, hoping that she might atone for Seyll's murder and show herself worthy of the faith Seyll had in her. Now a servant of Eilistraee, Halisstra hopes to turn her former companions away from their goal and share her newfound faith with others of her race.

Halisstra is tall and slender for a drow. Graceful and austere, she lacks the sensuality of many nobleborn drow women. She has turned her back on the cruelties and betrayals of her kind. She wears the armor she stripped from the dying Seyll Auzkovyn, and carries Seyll's sword in the hope that she will eventually be worthy of it.

Halisstra Melarn, Female Drow Bard 8/Cleric of Eilistraee 10: CR 19; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 8d6+16 plus 10d8+20; hp 109; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29 (touch 16, flat-footed 25); Base Atk +13; Grp +14; Atk +17 melee (1d8+3/17-20, *+2 keen holy longsword*) or +22 ranged (1d8+2/19-20, *+2 light crossbow*); Full Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+3/17-20, *+2 keen holy longsword*); SA bardic music, turn undead, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ bardic knowledge, drow traits, evasion; SR 29; AL CG; SV Fort +15, Ref +20, Will +24; Str 12, Dex 24, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 24, Cha 22.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +17, Concentration +19, Decipher Script +11, Diplomacy +17, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Heal +17, Hide +28, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (religion) +13, Listen +14, Move Silently +15, Perform (string instrument) +24, Search +10, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +19, Spot +19, Swim +1, Tumble +7; Greater Spell Penetration, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Penetration, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (heavy mace), Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages Known: Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

Bardic Music: Halisstra can use inspire courage, countersong, *fascinate*, inspire competence, or *suggestion* a total of 8 times per day.

Turn Undead: 10/day as 10th-level cleric (+2 on check for Knowledge).

Bardic Knowledge: Halisstra may make a bardic knowledge check at +11 to see whether she knows some relevant information about local notable people, legendary items, or noteworthy places.

Drow Traits: +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, darkvision 120 ft., immune to sleep effects, +2 racial bonus to saves vs. enchantment spells or effects.

Evasion: Takes no damage on a successful Reflex save against an effect that allows a Reflex save for half damage.

Bard Spells Known (3/5/5/2; save DC 16 + spell level or 17 + spell level for enchantment spells): 0—*daze, detect magic, light, mage hand, open/close, read magic;* 1st—*charm person, cure light wounds, expeditious retreat, silent image;* 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, invisibility, locate object, sound burst;* 3rd—*charm monster, dispel magic, remove curse.*

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6+1/6+1/5+1/4+1/3+1; save DC 17 + spell level or 18 + spell level for enchantment spells): 0—*detect magic (3), guidance, light, read magic;* 1st—*bless, charm person*, command, divine favor, protection from evil, sanctuary, shield of faith;* 2nd—*bull's strength, hold person, lesser restoration, resist energy, shatter*, silence, spiritual weapon;* 3rd—*daylight, dispel magic, magic circle against law*, prayer, searing light, wind wall;* 4th—*air walk, chaos hammer*, dismissal, divine power, summon monster IV;* 5th—*charm monster*, flame strike, plane shift, righteous might.*

*Domain spell. Domains: Chaos (chaos spells +1 caster level), Charm (boost Charisma 4 points once per day). The Charm domain appears in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting.*

HALISSTRA'S UNIQUE ITEMS

In addition to the items she acquired from Seyll, Halisstra had previously used her considerable wealth to have unique magic items created specifically for her.

Drow House Insignia: This brooch is worked in the design of a noble house's symbol. It allows the wearer to levitate as if he had cast *levitate* on himself. The house insignia does not take up an item slot.

Faint transmutation; 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *levitate*; Price: 32,400 gp.

Halisstra's Comb: This jet comb is normally worn pinned in the hair. It provides its bearer with a +4 enhancement bonus to Charisma and does not take up an item slot.

Moderate transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *eagle's splendor*; Price 32,000 gp.

Instrument of the Bards (Cli Lyre): This masterwork lyre (+2 bonus on Perform [string instrument] checks) bestows 1 negative level on any character who does not have at least 10 ranks in Perform (string instrument) (if that character tries to use the lyre). A character with at least 10 ranks in Perform (lyre) can use the instrument to cast *break enchantment, dimension door,* and *shout* once per day. It gives a +5 competence bonus on a bard's bardic music checks for countersong, *fascinate,* and *suggestion.*

Strong transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *break enchantment, dimension door, shout,* creator must be a bard; Price 37,600; Weight 3 lb. (The Cli lyre originally appeared in *Magic of Faerûn.*)

Piwafwi of Resistance: This black cloak adds a +4 resistance bonus to the wearer's saving throws and grants a +10 circumstance bonus on all of the wearer's Hide checks.

Strong transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Wondrous Item, *invisibility, resistance*; Price: 31,000 gp; Weight: 1 lb.

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire.* Caster level 18th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: *+2 keen holy longsword*, +3 light steel shield*, +4 elven chain, gloves of dexterity +6, amulet of health +6, headband of wisdom +4, Halisstra's comb of Charisma +4, +2 ring of protection*, piwafwi of resistance +4, +2 light crossbow*, +2 bolts* (50), boots of elvenkind, instrument of the bards (Cli lyre), ring of evasion, wand of greater invisibility, wand of cure serious wounds, Heward's handy haversack, drow house insignia,* backpack, bedroll, and routine supplies.

*These items formerly belonged to the priestess of Eilistraee, Seyll; Halisstra lost her own weapons and armor when she was captured by the surface elves in *Condemnation.*

Danifae Yauntyrr

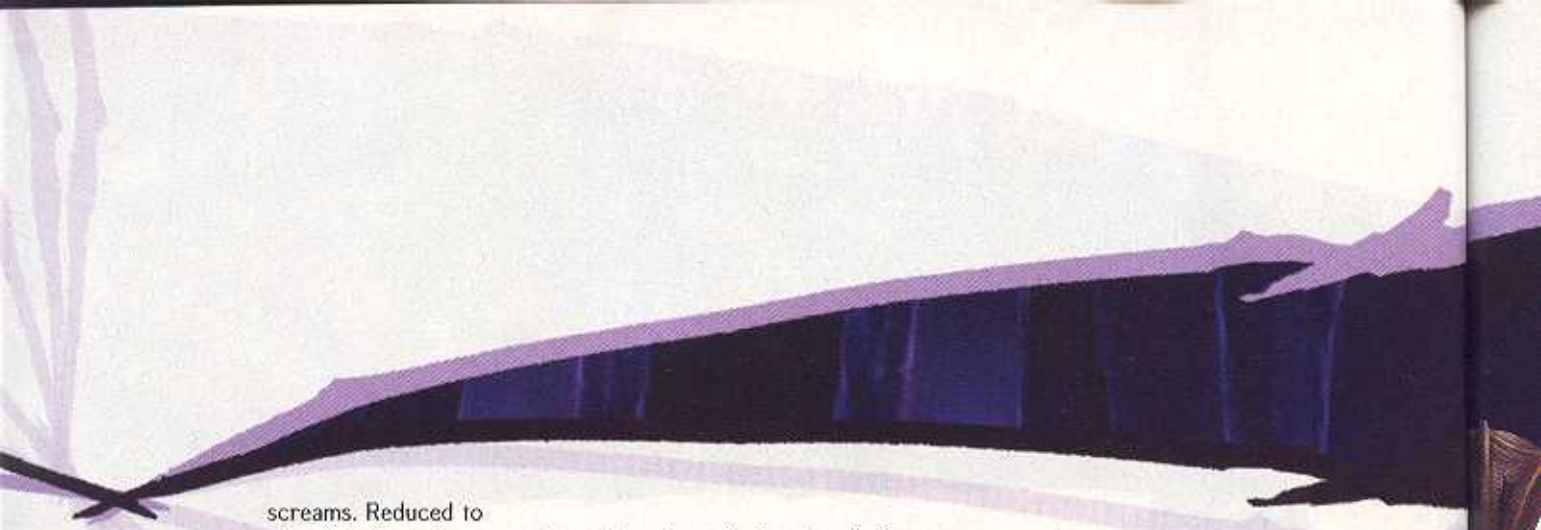
Once a priestess of a high house in Eryndlyn, forces of House Melarn captured Danifae during a skirmish between the cities Eryndlyn and Ched Nasad. House Melarn captured and enslaved her due to her striking beauty. Matron Melarn gave Danifae to her eldest daughter Halisstra as a maidservant and pet. Although Danifae absolutely loathed her captors and deeply resented her status, she was only a single unarmed slave in the middle of a strong house many hundreds of miles from her home city. More to the point, a magic locket around her neck ensured her loyalty by preventing Danifae from harming Halisstra.

Physically and magically deterred from any hope of escape, Danifae elected to play a subtle waiting game, slowly worming her way deeper into Halisstra's confidences with years of faithful service and clever advice, all the while dreaming of the day when she would exact vengeance for her degrading situation. She reveled in the destruction of Ched Nasad and fall of House Melarn, although she was careful not to show it; the power Halisstra wielded through the magic locket still endured, and Danifae did not dare to let Halisstra know the depths of her hate. Thus, as Halisstra accompanied Quenthel and the rest of the Menzoberranyr in their flight from the city's ruin and the continuation of their quest for Lolth, Danifae had no choice but to accompany her mistress.

In the company's subsequent travels, Danifae quickly realized that Halisstra lived only at Quenthel Baenre's sufferance. Therefore, in order to gain power over her mistress and to insure herself against any more reversals of fortune, Danifae seduced Quenthel, while convincing Halisstra that she was doing so only in order to strengthen Halisstra's hand against the Menzoberranyr. At first, Danifae considered only how she might bring about Halisstra's destruction. As she accompanied the Menzoberranyr all the way to the depths of the Demonweb Pits, however, and saw Halisstra fall by the wayside, Danifae realized that Lolth's Silence offered not only a challenge to the drow, but an opportunity—an opportunity far more important than obtaining vengeance against a former mistress.

Danifae is young (for a drow) and strikingly beautiful. Her demure attitude hides a cold, calculating, and purely evil dark elf who understands that subtlety and patience are weapons far more deadly than mere steel and spell.

Danifae Yauntyrr, Female Drow Rogue 2/Cleric 13/Blackguard 2: CR 18; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 2d6+4 plus 13d8+26 plus 2d10+4; hp 110; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 28 (touch 17, flat-footed 24); Base Atk +12; Grp +13; Atk +17 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 electricity, *+3 shocking burst morningstar*); Full Atk



screams. Reduced to a mere handful of dragon-blooded sorcerers and assassins, the surviving lords of Chaulssin founded minor Houses and secret guilds of assassins in other drow cities.

The Anointed Blade is traditionally the single strongest, deadliest, and most clever assassin of the House. Nimor believes that in order to "save" the dark elves from the madness and tyranny of Lolth, drow society must be shattered. If cities fall and thousands of drow die, then it must be borne, since misery and disaster will turn the drow away from Lolth and to other drow deities. He's willing to risk centuries of weakness, enslavement, and untold suffering for the drow in order to root out Lolth's power over the race and raise the Jaezred Chaulssin as the secret masters of a drow society shaped to their liking.

Nimor uses a variety of guises, most magical in origin. He most often appears as a slender, almost boyish drow male of striking good looks, with the easy grace and blinding speed of a professional duelist. He favors the role of a noble rake, and can pass himself off as a highborn lad of a great House with ease. He also cultivates practical identities, including that of a gem merchant, in order to move freely and elude observation. Nimor is far stronger than he appears (a trace of his ancient draconic heritage, perhaps), and he has mastered many of the dark spells of the assassin's deadly trade.

Nimor Imphraezl, Male Drow Half-Shadow Dragon Rogue 3/Fighter 4/Assassin 9; CR 19: Medium dragon; HD 3d6+15 plus 4d10+20 plus 9d6+40; hp 139; Init +12; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 33 (touch 21, flat-footed 25); Base Atk +12; Grp +21; Atk +26 melee (1d6+15/15-20 plus 1d6 or 1d10 cold, *+4 keen icy burst rapier*) or +21 melee (1d4+9, claw); Full Atk +24/+19/+14 melee (1d6+15/15-20 plus 1d6 or 1d10 cold, *+4 keen icy burst rapier*) and +22/+17 melee (1d4+7/17-20, *+3 keen venomous dagger*), or +21/+21 melee (1d4+9, claws) and +16 melee (1d6+4, bite); SA breath weapon, death attack, sneak attack +7d6, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, evasion, half-dragon traits, hide in plain sight, improved uncanny dodge, poison use; SR 27; AL CE; SV Fort +20, Ref +28, Will +15; Str 28, Dex 26, Con 21, Int 19, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Balance +16, Bluff +17, Climb +19, Diplomacy +21, Disable Device +10, Disguise +11 (13 when acting), Hide +33, Intimidate +8, Jump +19, Listen +12, Move Silently +28, Open Lock +18, Ride +12, Search +21, Sense Motive +10, Spot +18, Swim +13, Tumble +16; Blind-fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier).

Languages Known: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

Breath Weapon: Once per day, Nimor can breathe a 30-foot cone that bestows 1d2 negative levels. A successful DC 15 Reflex save reduces this by half. A DC 15 Fortitude save removes the negative levels after 24 hours.

Death Attack: If Nimor studies an opponent for 3 rounds and then makes a successful sneak attack with a melee weapon, he can kill or paralyze his foe unless the victim succeeds at a DC 23 Fortitude save; even if this save is successful, the victim still suffers sneak attack damage.

Drow Traits: +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, darkvision 120 ft., immune to sleep effects, +2 racial bonus to saves vs. enchantment spells or effects.

Half-Dragon Traits: Low-light vision 60 ft., immune to sleep, paralysis, and energy drain.

Hide in Plain Sight: Nimor can use the Hide skill even while being observed.

Improved Uncanny Dodge: Retains Dex bonus to AC when flat-footed or attacked by an invisible foe, can no longer be flanked except by a rogue of 16th level or higher.

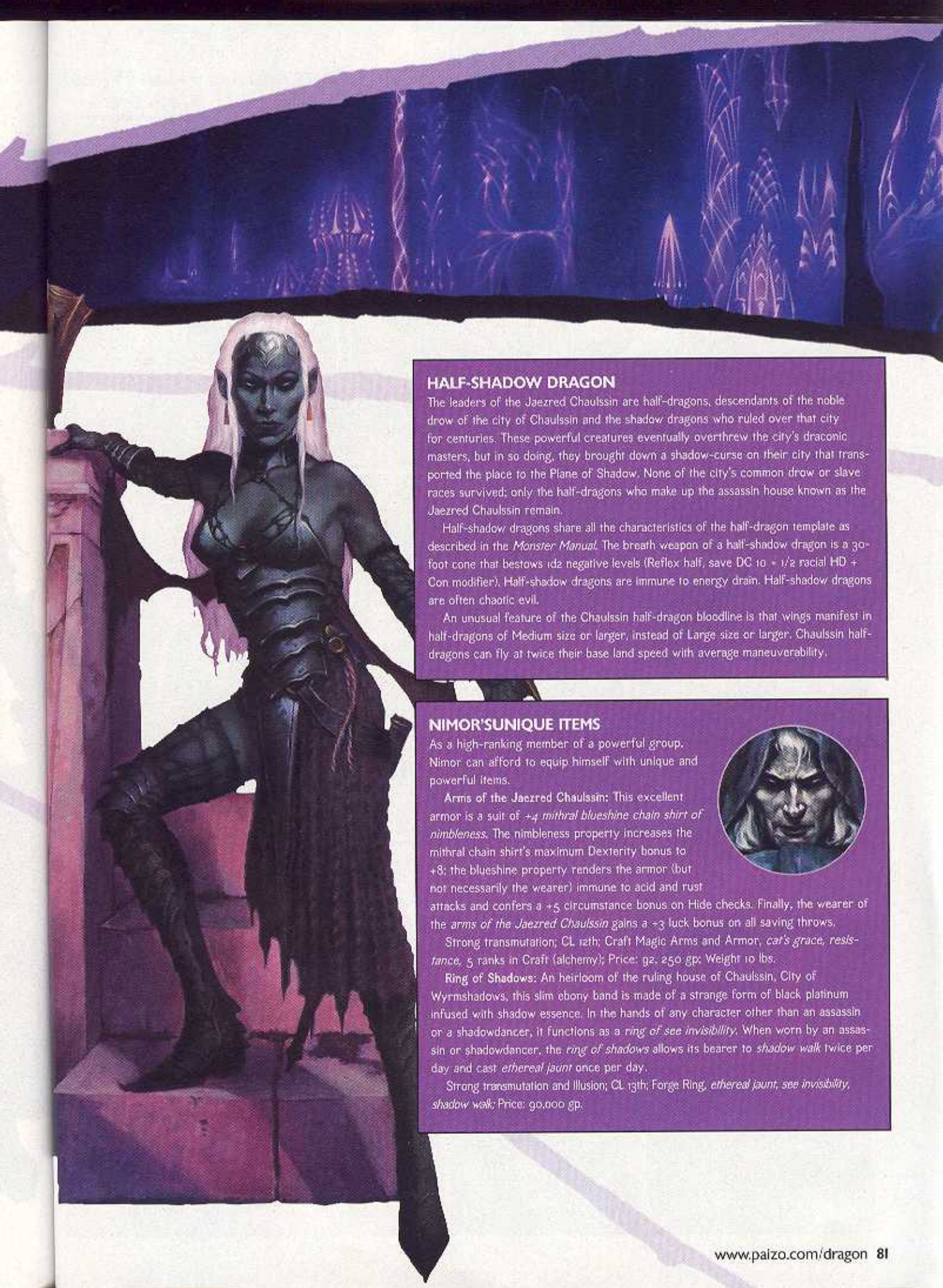
Poison Use: Nimor is skilled in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning himself when applying poison to a blade.

Save Bonus Against Poison: Nimor's assassin levels confer a +4 bonus on saves against poison.

Assassin Spells Known (4/4/4/3, base save DC 14 + spell level): 1st—*disguise self, ghost sound, obscuring mist, true strike;* 2nd—*alter self, darkness, invisibility, pass without trace;* 3rd—*deep slumber, false life, misdirection, nondetection;* 4th—*freedom of movement, greater invisibility, poison.*

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire.* Caster level 16th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: *+4 keen icy burst rapier, +3 keen venomous dagger, arms of the Jaezred Chaulssin, belt of giant strength +4, bracers of dexterity +6, amulet of health +6, +3 ring of protection, piwafwi of resistance +4, ring of shadows, boots of elvenkind, drow house insignia.*



HALF-SHADOW DRAGON

The leaders of the Jaezred Chaulssin are half-dragons, descendants of the noble drow of the city of Chaulssin and the shadow dragons who ruled over that city for centuries. These powerful creatures eventually overthrew the city's draconic masters, but in so doing, they brought down a shadow-curse on their city that transported the place to the Plane of Shadow. None of the city's common drow or slave races survived; only the half-dragons who make up the assassin house known as the Jaezred Chaulssin remain.

Half-shadow dragons share all the characteristics of the half-dragon template as described in the *Monster Manual*. The breath weapon of a half-shadow dragon is a 30-foot cone that bestows 1d2 negative levels (Reflex half, save DC 10 + 1/2 racial HD + Con modifier). Half-shadow dragons are immune to energy drain. Half-shadow dragons are often chaotic evil.

An unusual feature of the Chaulssin half-dragon bloodline is that wings manifest in half-dragons of Medium size or larger, instead of Large size or larger. Chaulssin half-dragons can fly at twice their base land speed with average maneuverability.

NIMOR'S UNIQUE ITEMS

As a high-ranking member of a powerful group, Nimor can afford to equip himself with unique and powerful items.

Arms of the Jaezred Chaulssin: This excellent armor is a suit of *+4 mithral blueshine chain shirt of nimbleness*. The nimbleness property increases the mithral chain shirt's maximum Dexterity bonus to +8; the blueshine property renders the armor (but not necessarily the wearer) immune to acid and rust attacks and confers a +5 circumstance bonus on Hide checks. Finally, the wearer of the *arms of the Jaezred Chaulssin* gains a +3 luck bonus on all saving throws.

Strong transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *cat's grace*, *resistance*, 5 ranks in Craft (alchemy); Price: 92, 250 gp; Weight 10 lbs.

Ring of Shadows: An heirloom of the ruling house of Chaulssin, City of Wyrmshadows, this slim ebony band is made of a strange form of black platinum infused with shadow essence. In the hands of any character other than an assassin or a shadowdancer, it functions as a *ring of see invisibility*. When worn by an assassin or shadowdancer, the *ring of shadows* allows its bearer to *shadow walk* twice per day and cast *ethereal jaunt* once per day.

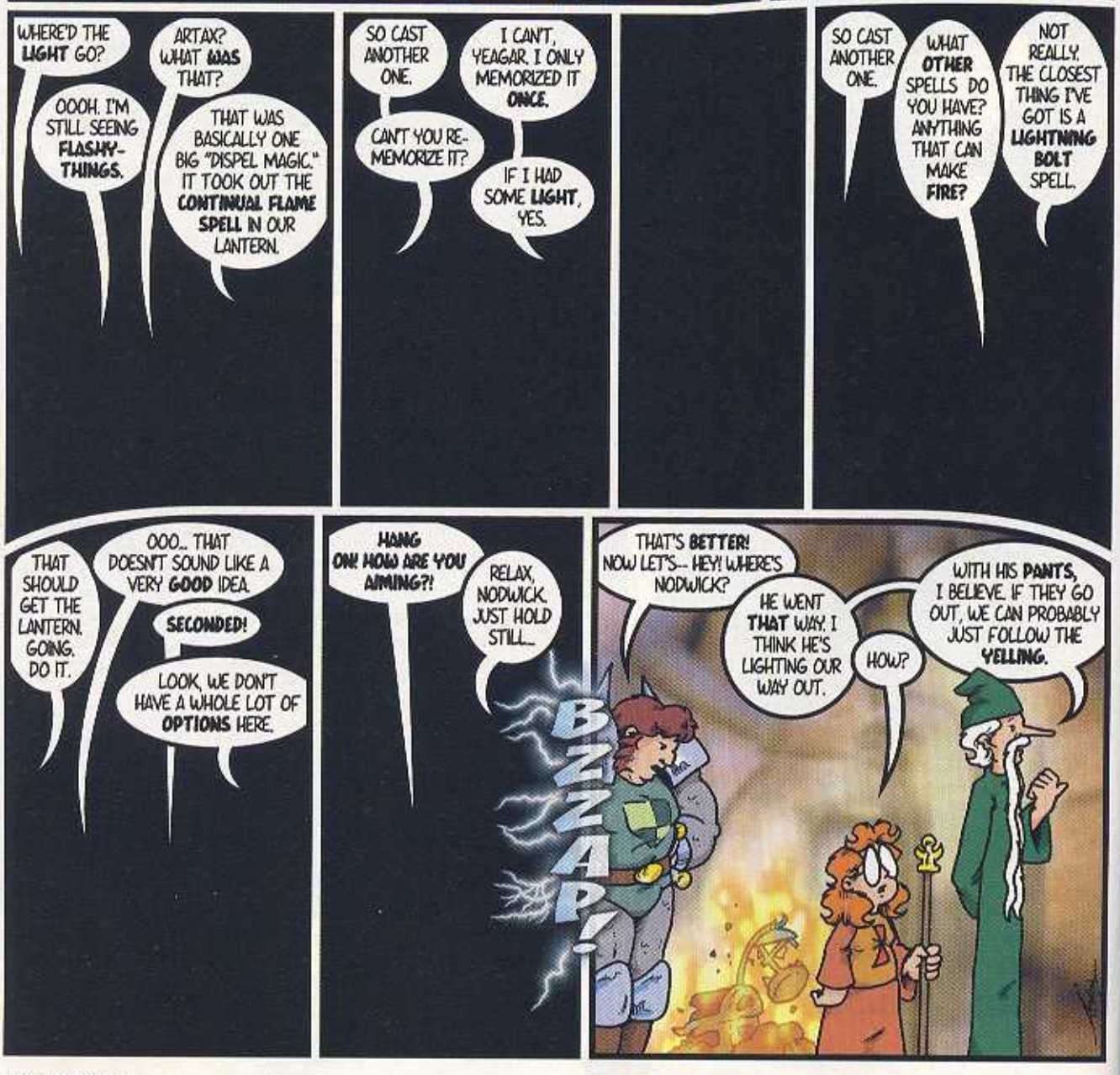
Strong transmutation and illusion; CL 13th; Forge Ring, *ethereal jaunt*, *see invisibility*, *shadow walk*; Price: 90,000 gp.

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

"Hello, darkness, my old friend..." - Simon & Garfunkel
"I attack the darkness!" -The Dead Alewives

OKAY, WE'VE GOT THE HELM OF ULTIMATE DOOM ON THE ALTAR. NOW WHAT?
NOW I CALL UPON THE FORCES OF GOODNESS AND HAPPY PUPPIES TO UNMAKE THIS NAUGHTY HORNED HAT. YOO-HOO? FORCES OF GOODNESS?
WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN?
BEATS ME. THE TALES ABOUT THE HELM ARE PRETTY VAGUE...
KA
CRI


WHERE'D THE LIGHT GO?
OOOH. I'M STILL SEEING FLASHY-THINGS.
ARTAX? WHAT WAS THAT?
THAT WAS BASICALLY ONE BIG "DISPEL MAGIC." IT TOOK OUT THE CONTINUAL FLAME SPELL IN OUR LANTERN.
SO CAST ANOTHER ONE.
I CAN'T, YEAGAR. I ONLY MEMORIZED IT ONCE.
CAN'T YOU RE-MEMORIZE IT?
IF I HAD SOME LIGHT, YES.
SO CAST ANOTHER ONE.
WHAT OTHER SPELLS DO YOU HAVE? ANYTHING THAT CAN MAKE FIRE?
NOT REALLY. THE CLOSEST THING I'VE GOT IS A LIGHTNING BOLT SPELL.
THAT SHOULD GET THE LANTERN GOING. DO IT.
OOO.. THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A VERY GOOD IDEA.
SECONDED!
LOOK, WE DON'T HAVE A WHOLE LOT OF OPTIONS HERE.
HANG ON! HOW ARE YOU AIMING?!
RELAX, NODWICK. JUST HOLD STILL...
BZZAP!
THAT'S BETTER! NOW LET'S-- HEY! WHERE'S NODWICK?
HE WENT THAT WAY. I THINK HE'S LIGHTING OUR WAY OUT.
HOW?
WITH HIS PANTS, I BELIEVE. IF THEY GO OUT, WE CAN PROBABLY JUST FOLLOW THE YELLING.

THE WYRMWORKS
A HORDE OF DRAGONS

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

The fair city of Silverymoon bristles with small, eccentric, poorly publicized boutiques that sell fascinating wares. Front parlors host some of these, and many have no street sign, or only the most discreet advertising. One of the most fascinating of these shops is "the Wyrmworks," an establishment that's been open for barely a year on Many Cats Lane in Northbank (the older part of the city north of the River Rauvin).

The Wyrmworks specializes in sales of dragon fangs, scales, blood, and preserved eyes, tails, talons, and pieces of wing. Its proprietors also sell maps to (and of) known dragon lairs and rent out a magically preserved and animated red dragon head.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

The shop is one of the more spectacular in the Forgotten Realms. The huge preserved wing of a blue dragon dominates the windowless chamber whose vaulted stone ceiling wouldn't be out of place in a temple. The wing stretches out in a grand curve from the door to the stairs on the right (a landing from which the cellar stairs go down and the steps to the living quarters of the owners and their guards ascend) around the back of the room to the door to the workshops on the left.

Beneath the sheltering magnificence of this great wing, the back wall of the shop contains a dozen maps to dragon lairs—colorful items of pure fancy painted for their looks, with small round scenes of points along the way superimposed on a verdant landscape marked with the trail to the lair. Smaller copies of each of these maps—sans most of the painting—are for sale, stored in rothé-horn tubes in racks beneath each map. The top of each rack supports a small, mirrored lamp whose angled panes serve to reflect and throw all of the lamplight up onto the map above.

The back room holds more expensive and detailed maps, available only to those who ask for them. Dragon blood and organs are handled in the same way. It should be noted that the seller never leaves customers alone in the shop and rings a bell to summon other staff to fetch such items.

The central counter is surrounded by an open aisleway that allows customers to freely walk about and view wares, a ring-shaped affair whose wooden walls are split, just below the countertops, by shallow glass display cases containing small pieces of dragon remains (mainly fangs) and trophies of rusty treasure and broken weaponry, skulls, and the like from victims or failed adventurers brought back from dragon lairs. Any dragon skulls available for sale hang suspended from the ceiling (like the lamps that illuminate the shop), usually directly above the central sales counter.

Considered trade secrets at the Wyrmworks, cleansers and preservatives for dragon remains—mostly a variety of plant oils—are never offered for sale or identification. The sales staff tells persistent customers who want to know such things, "We leave such matters to experts who desire to keep their work a mystery, and we dare not offend them lest we lose access to their services."

The usual centerpiece of the shop display is Old Roaring Rage, the famous preserved red dragon head. It's usually mounted on its own glossy, carved wooden stand off to one side (the owners discovered that placing it front and center to confront buyers caused a lot of folk to promptly turn around and leave). If the dragon head is rented out, the splendid snarling head of some fanciful, unknown sort of dragon, crafted of shining electrum by Uraerik Thaurongol (a dwarven craftsmith of Everlund), is displayed in its place. Neither head is for sale, but smaller and less ornate metal replicas (made by lesser dwarven smiths of Silverymoon) are sold for 200 to 400 gp each, depending on size and

appearance. They're kept in a back room until requested.

The two floors of living quarters above the shop sport balconies, bay windows, and slate roofs. Levers at various places in their floors allow persons above to drop down portcullislike bars to wall off all doorways in the shop below—something done at any time of night or day when suspicious noises are heard from the shop, during deliveries, or whenever the shop is closed and the owners' bodyguards are unavailable.

TRADE AT THE WYRMWORKS

Business at the shop began slowly—prices for dragon remains tend to be high, and the number of persons able to use them for more than decorative ornaments is relatively low—but has become so brisk in the last few months that the owners are contemplating opening a branch office in Waterdeep.

Dragon remains are rare and dangerous to obtain: There's the trifling matter of slaying a dragon, the minor annoyance of butchering a cottage-sized carcass before something hungry comes along to devour it, and then transporting what you've carved off before it rots—usually through difficult terrain in remote areas. Prices rise and fall with availability of desired dragon parts, but haggling determines all sale prices.

The owners of the Wyrmworks sharply raise prices if they think a potential buyer is apt to become a danger to them or the wider Realms once furnished with dragon remains. A Red Wizard of Thay or member of the Arcane Brotherhood is charged far more than a mage of Silverymoon whose character is known to the sellers, for example. Scarcity in the face of demand also raises prices.

When buying such materials from adventurers, the Wyrmworks typically pays 50% to 75% of current sale prices, with 60% being the norm.

RORYK AND DELGRATH

The owners of The Wyrmworks are two white-haired, paunchy, gruff, and successful old adventurers who are crazy about dragons. They love to hear tales of dragon sightings, hunts, slayings, and battles—and try to keep abreast of which dragons are currently lairing and hunting where. Constant companions and firm business partners, the two men live above the shop and staff it in shifts, their bodyguards acting as fetch-and-carry assistants.

Roryk (CG male human Ftr9) is slightly kinder and Delgrath (CN male human Sorn) more irascible, but both are worldwise veterans who keep abreast of news and possible perils. Roryk and Delgrath employ a maid—a trusted, sharp-tongued, and attentive human woman named Alrue. This tall and rangy, dusky-skinned beauty hails from Calimshan, and assists "the Old Boys" in preparation of materials, seeing to customers, and keeping all floors of the Wyrmworks clean. In a stainless steel flask, Alrue always carries a *potion of invisibility* they've given her, and is under orders to use it if she ever observes a theft or break-in (to try to identify and follow the culprits, and then report as soon as possible to Roryk and Delgrath).

OLD ROARING RAGE

During their adventuring days, the owners of The Wyrmworks found this magically-preserved and animated red dragon head among the furnishings of an abandoned wizard's tower. They have no idea what magic powers keep it supple and looking lifelike, and couldn't repair or replace it if anything happened to it. Roryk gave the head its present nickname.

Old Roaring Rage is about the size of six human heads and appears to have come from a young adult red dragon. The head has the same features today as when found; its crafters and original purpose remain mysteries.

Old Roaring Rage has been hollowed out inside and fitted with a headband and shoulder-rest harness so a strong human can wear it. The neck turns, and the scales and skin shift when such movements occur, as if living muscles moved beneath. The jaw articulates, the tongue moves and looks damp, and the lips can draw back from the teeth in an expression of rage (although the nostrils don't flare). The dragon eyes are artificial—although they look real—and move in tandem to follow the direction of the wearer's head or a lever.

Another lever works the jaws to move in time with speech. Words said into a short speaking-tube inside the head are magically deepened, amplified, and made to sound wet and hissing in character.

Two faintly-glowing words are graven inside the head: "Raulithus" and "Torthar." Saying the former causes the head to seem awake and alive, even when unattended. It appears to breathe, it yawns slightly from time to time, it turns from side to side and the eyes seem to peer about—although of course it doesn't respond to events or movements around it. Saying "Torthar" causes the head to seem asleep; the eyes sag closed and stay that way, it breathes slowly and deeply, and it occasionally growls softly in its throat and shifts position slightly. Saying either word a second time ends its magical animation.

The Wyrmworks rents out Old Roaring Rage for 100 gp per day.

Faint illusion and necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *gentle repose, major image;* Price 2,600 gp; Weight 60 lb.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Ah, the ironies of life pile swift and deep when one talks of the Wyrmworks! Know ye what Roryk and Delgrath do not: that Alrue Crownshield is no Calishite at all, but a song dragon! (An "adult" of that species, I believe.)

Although Alrue loves her employers, she covertly works to foil depredations against dragonkind by drawing deliberately incorrect dragon-lair maps, which she sells (through intermediaries) back to her employers. Alrue's maps omit traps and warning telltales she knows of, or misdirect adventurers following them into other perils along the way. She's careful to employ different styles of mapping, varying inks and the materials she draws on, and is careful never to supply too many maps and so dominate the stock at the Wyrmworks.

We've spoken together, and she told me she's content with her life—whenever she grows restless or angry, she takes dragon form when she can do so unobserved and dives down to give the Old Boys from the shop a fright. Once, desiring a little vacation, she invented a theft and spent some days wandering Silverymoon "investigating it" (really seeing who was in town, hearing gossip, and looking at all the latest shops, goods, goings-on, and fashions).

THE
WYRMWORKS
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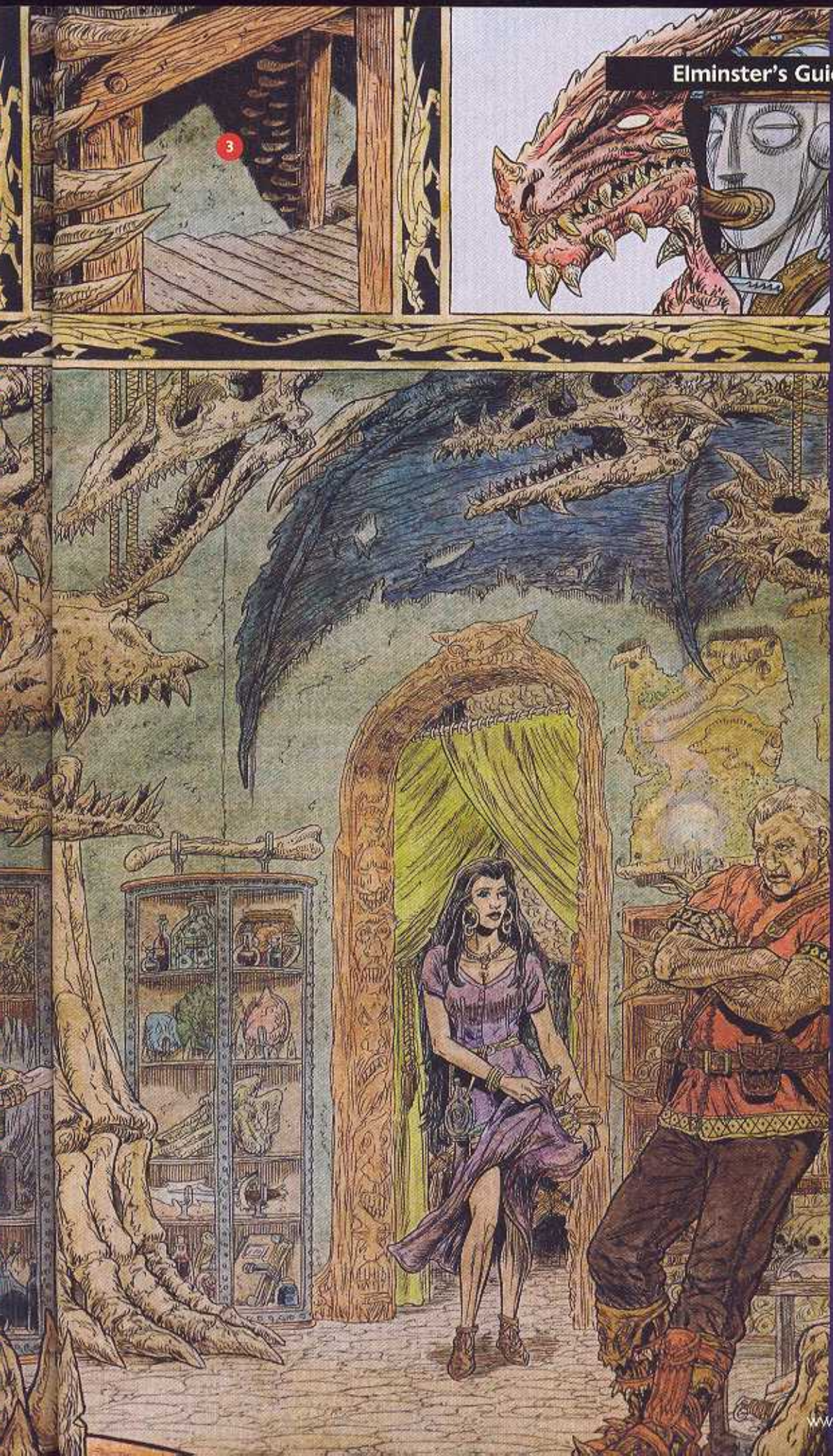


THE WYRMWORKS

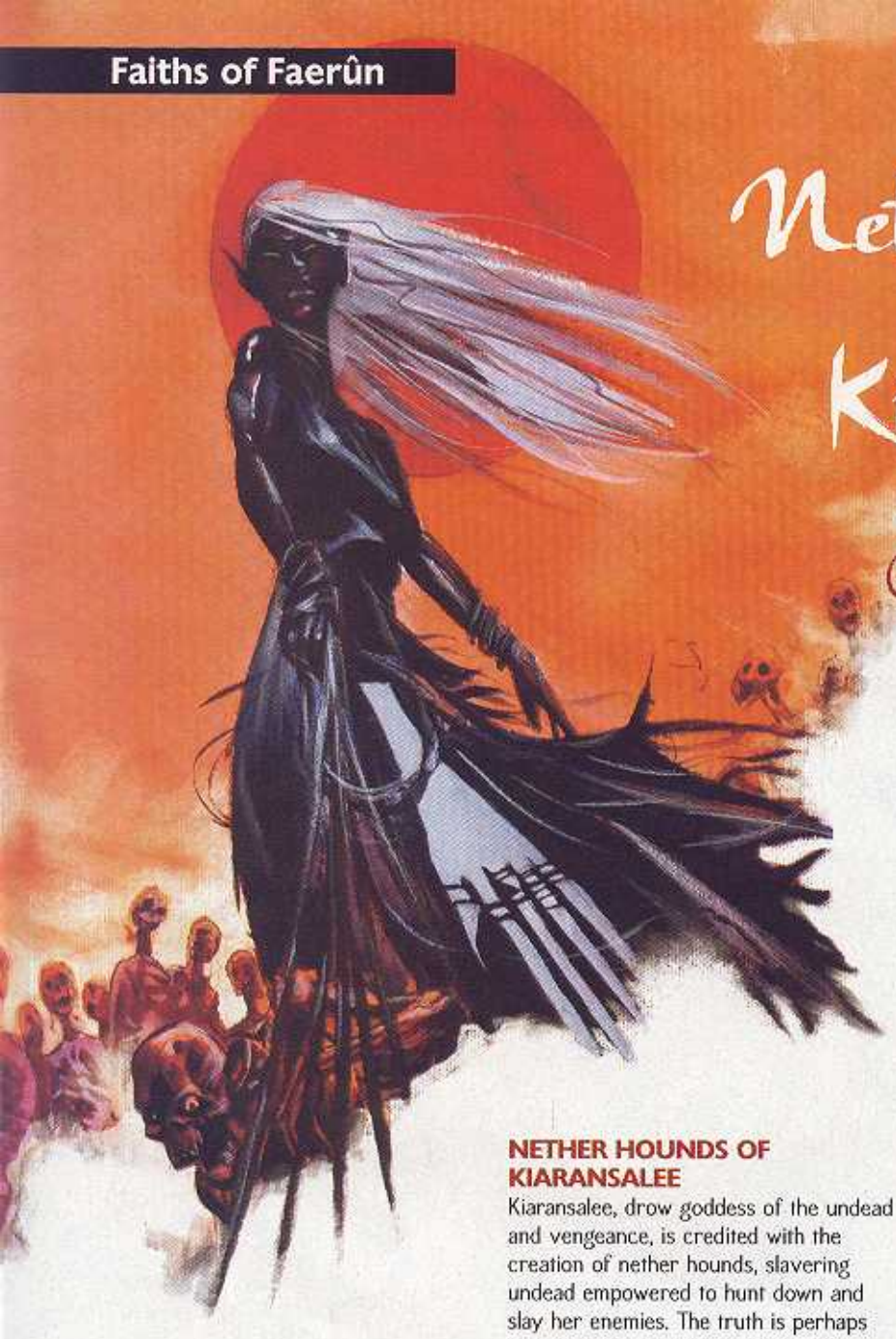
1. The lowest reaches of the roof have loose slates that dangle askew. These are traps: If anyone or anything slides a slate out of the way and reaches into the revealed cavity beneath, a wire noose snaps about the intruding object, hand, or creature, ringing a bell inside the guardroom above the shop.

Wire Alarm Trap: CR 1/2; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +16 melee touch attack (to establish grapple), grapple check +14 (alarm sounds on successful hold attempt); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 18. *Market Price:* 1,000 gp.

2. A foot-treadle alarm behind the central counter rings a small bell beside a bench across the street. Youths paid by the Old Boys loiter there and follow any non-Wyrmworks staff they see leaving the shop after the bell rings. Their orders are to see where such persons go and what they do (without being detected).

3. To discourage unauthorized entry onto these stairs (and give ignorant thieves something worthless to steal), false "dragon claws" fashioned of rothé horn, reptile skin, and modeling clay are positioned around the insides of all doorframes leading off the stairs.

4. One step of the cellar stairs lifts (when the correct nearby wall-stone is removed and a revealed lever is pulled) to permit access to a hidden coin storage cavity under the steps. A DC 20 Search check reveals the existence of this storage area.



Nether Hounds of Kiaransalee

Death Pack of the Goddess of Vengeance

by Thomas M. Costa
Illustrated by Tom Fowler

Unlike many gods of the Forgotten Realms who lord over realms of death and the undead, Kiaransalee prides herself on imagination. Rather than contenting herself to rule over endless legions of uniform, rotting terrors, the drow goddess appreciates original and monstrously elegant servants. Like a mother with a newborn, Kiaransalee favors each infant variety of undead, coddling and doting on new strains with perverse adoration. Thus, Kiaransalee's current favor falls to her youngest and most promising children, the augmented undead she's named nether hounds.

NETHER HOUNDS OF KIARANSALEE

Kiaransalee, drow goddess of the undead and vengeance, is credited with the creation of nether hounds, slavering undead empowered to hunt down and slay her enemies. The truth is perhaps more complex, as other powers of undeath have also been known to send these fiendish undead after their foes. In fact, Kiaransalee has shared the nature of the nether hounds' creation with her allies—particularly those who have sided with her against the demon lord Orcus.

Night hag servitors of Kiaransalee throughout the Lower Planes care for the goddess's packs of nether hounds. The hags create, train, and hire out the hounds to demon lords and other interested parties who have someone they need hunted down and slain. The exact process of how nether hounds are created remains unknown, although it is thought to require acts only Kiaransalee and her night hag minions are corrupt enough to perform.

Nether hounds are corporeal undead infused with Kiaransalee's godly lust for vengeance and granted the power to hunt down and slay almost any quarry. They are perhaps the most bestial of undead, slavering and yowling as they hunt their prey, often loping and scampering about on their clawed hands and feet. Their faces are distorted wrecks, their eyes weeping viscous black tears and their mouths filled with wicked fangs that drip a similarly grotesque spittle. More often than not, they are organized into hunts of thirteen such monstrosities, usually made up of twelve nether hound ghouls led by a nether hound ghast. The creatures relish their role as hunters, relying on their senses and skill to track down prey. Even if their quarry escapes their grasp, they know a single diseased claw will slow their prey down for the final kill.

The faithful of Kiaransalee and her allies, such as Velsharoon, may enlist nether hounds into their service by using a *planar ally* spell to contact a night hag in the service of the goddess. The cleric must then barter with the hag for the service of one or more nether hounds to carry out the agreed-upon task. However, those who command nether hounds must always be wary, as the hounds are first and foremost the servants of Kiaransalee. As such, they always carry out the will of their goddess over the wishes of any other creature, even a more powerful deity.

KIARANSALEE

Lady of the Dead, the Revenancer, the Vengeful Banshee

Drow Demigod

Symbol:	Female drow hand wearing silver rings
Home Plane:	Demonweb Pits
Alignment:	Chaotic evil
Portfolio:	Undead, vengence
Worshipers:	Drow, necromancers, undead
Cleric Alignments:	CE, CN, NE
Domains:	Chaos, Drow*, Evil, Retribution*, Undeath* (*from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*)
Favored Weapon:	"Cold Heart" (dagger)

Kiaransalee (*kee*-uh-*ran*-sa-lee) is cruel, twisted, and consumed by thoughts of vengeance. The Lady of the Dead descended into madness long ago, but she retains her warped cunning and a clear recollection of every slight or insult done to her—real or imagined. Favoring the company of mindless undead to creatures capable of sentient thought, she prefers tools to allies and is swift to act personally rather than trust someone else to do justice to her vision.

Clerics of Kiaransalee pray for their spells at midnight, when the spirits are most restless in their graves. Many of the revenancer's clerics multiclass as necromancers and most eventually transform themselves into various forms of undead.

SAMPLE NETHER HOUND

A gaunt creature hunches bestially before you, its filth-stained gray flesh stretched taut over protruding bones. Its features might have once been humanoid, but now it is a thing of savagery and decay, its hollow eyes and snarling mouth weeping a viscous black gore.

This example uses a ghast as the base creature.

Nether Hound Ghast

Medium Undead
Hit Dice: 4d12+3 (29 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.
AC: 21 (+5 Dex, +6 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+7
Attack: Bite +7 melee (1d8+5 plus paralysis and diseases)
Full Attack: Bite +7 melee (1d8+5 plus paralysis and diseases) and 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+2 plus paralysis and disease)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Demon fever, ghoul fever, paralysis, stench, sure striking, yowling
Special Qualities: Acid and fire resistance 5, cold immunity, darkvision 60 ft., electricity and sonic resistance 10, low-light vision, scent, +2 turn resistance, undead
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +7
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 21, Con —, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 18
Skills: Balance +9, Climb +19, Hide +10, Jump +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Search +6, Spot +15, Survival +9
Feats: Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Run, Toughness, Track
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary, team (2-3), pack (4-12), or hunt (13-30 nether hounds).
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 5-8 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: —

Nether hound ghasts are commonly pack leaders of hunts of lesser nether hounds. Already being disgusting and profane creatures, the transformation that makes them into nether hounds only deepens their already considerable depravity.

Combat

Afflicting all their prey's senses at once, nether hound ghasts favor charging into combat so their yowling and stench abilities take maximum effect. Once engaged, their savagery takes hold and they rend and maul their foes until they or their enemies are destroyed.

Diseases (Ex): Nether hound ghasts carry two diseases, demon fever and ghoul fever. Characters hit by a bite attack must make two separate saves versus both diseases. Characters hit by a claw attack must make a save only against demon fever.

Demon fever—bite and claw, Fortitude save DC 16, incubation period 1 day; damage 1d6 temporary Constitution. Each day thereafter, on a failed save the creature must immediately succeed at another Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of permanent Constitution drain (see page 292 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). This save is Charisma-based.

Ghoul fever—bite, Fortitude DC 16, incubation period 1 day; damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex. The save DC is Charisma-based.

An afflicted humanoid who dies of ghoul fever rises as a ghoul at the next midnight. A humanoid who becomes a ghoul in this way retains none of the abilities it possessed in life. It is not under the control of any other ghouls, but it hungers for the flesh of the living and behaves like a normal ghoul in all respects. A humanoid of 4 Hit Dice or more rises as a ghast, not a ghoul.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a nether hound ghast's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Even elves can be affected by this paralysis. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Stench (Ex): The stink of death and corruption surrounding these creatures is overwhelming. Living creatures within 10 feet must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6+4 minutes. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same nether hound ghast's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from a sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Sure Striking (Ex): Nether hound attacks with natural or manufactured weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Yowling (Su): All creatures (except evil outsiders and undead) within 100 feet of a yowling nether hound must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or become shaken for as long as they are within range of this ability and can hear the gibbering undead. If the save is successful, the affected creature is immune to that nether hound's yowling for 24 hours. Nether hounds yowl as a free-action and do so almost constantly. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, fear effect. The save is Charisma-based.

CREATING A NETHER HOUND

"Nether hound" is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal undead with an Intelligence of 3 or

more and nongood alignment (referred to hereafter as the "base creature").

A nether hound uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Speed: Nether hounds are quick and capable of scampering up or down just about anything to take down their prey. The nether hound adds +10 feet to its land speed and gains a climb speed of 20 feet if it did not already have an equivalent or greater climb speed.

AC: The base creature's natural armor improves by +2.

Special Attacks: A nether hound retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains the following new abilities.

Demon Fever (Ex): Disease—natural attacks, Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 nether hound's HD + nether hound's Charisma modifier), incubation period 1 day, damage 1d6 temporary Constitution. Each day after the first, on a failed save, an afflicted creature must immediately succeed at another Fortitude save (with the same DC) or 1 point of the Constitution damage is ability drain instead.

Sure Striking (Ex): Nether hound attacks with natural or manufactured weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Yowling (Su): Nether hounds are prone to bestial slavering, howling, moaning, and gibbering when they pick up the scent of their prey—though they are generally intelligent enough to keep this urge in check if it is to their best advantage. All creatures (except evil outsiders and undead) within 100 feet of a yowling nether hound must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 nether hound's HD + nether hound's Charisma modifier) or become shaken for as long as they are within range of this ability and can hear the gibbering undead. If the save is successful, the affected creature is immune to that nether hound's yowling for 24 hours. Nether hounds yowl as a free-action and do so almost constantly. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, fear effect.

Special Qualities: A nether hound retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those listed below.

Elemental Resistances (Ex): Nether hounds have fire and acid resistance 5, electricity and sonic resistance 10, and are immune to cold.

Senses of the Hound (Ex): Nether hounds gain scent and low-light vision.

Abilities: Adjust from the base creature as follows: +4 Str, +4 Dex, -2 Int, +2 Wis, +2 Cha.

Skills: Nether hounds receive a +6 racial bonus on Listen, Search, Spot, and Survival checks. In addition, as the nether hound has a climb speed, it gains a +8 racial bonus to Climb checks.

Feats: Nether hounds gain Improved Initiative, Run, and Track, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and doesn't already have these feats.

Climate/Terrain: Any land.

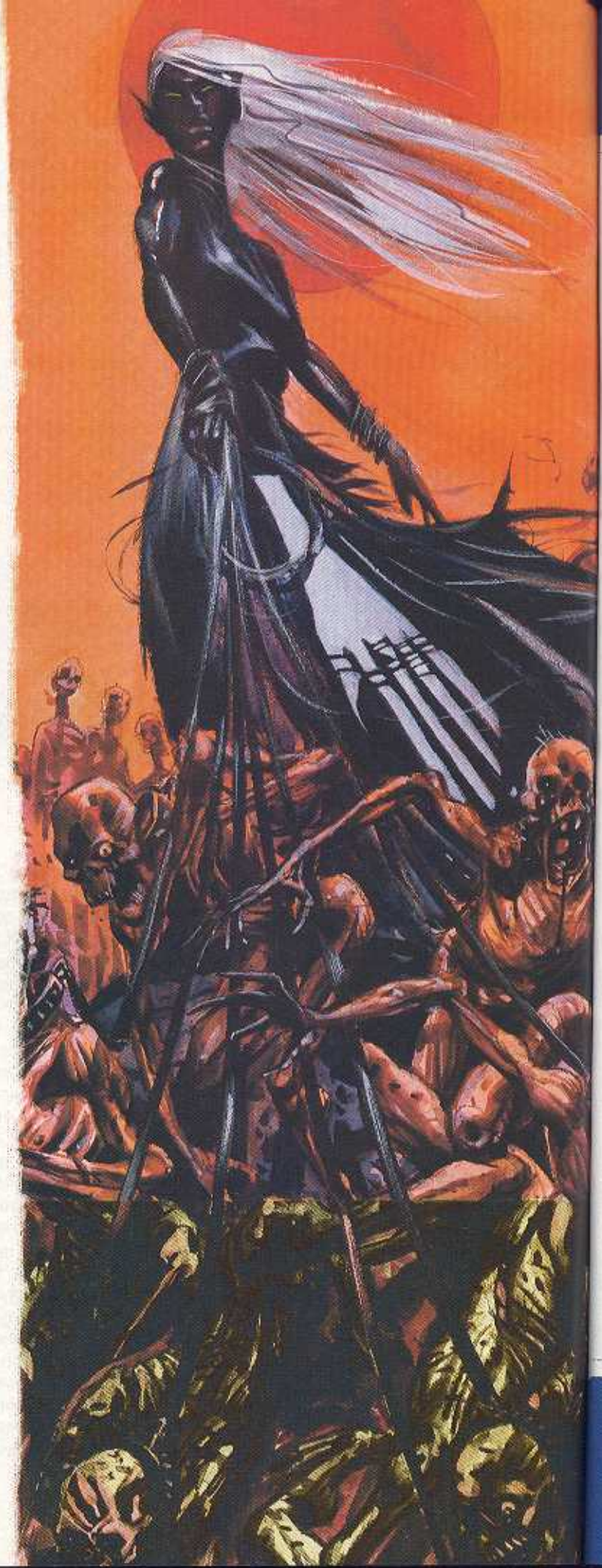
Organization: Solitary, team (2-3), pack (4-12), or hunt (13-30 nether hounds).

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Alignment: Always chaotic evil.

Advancement: As base creature.

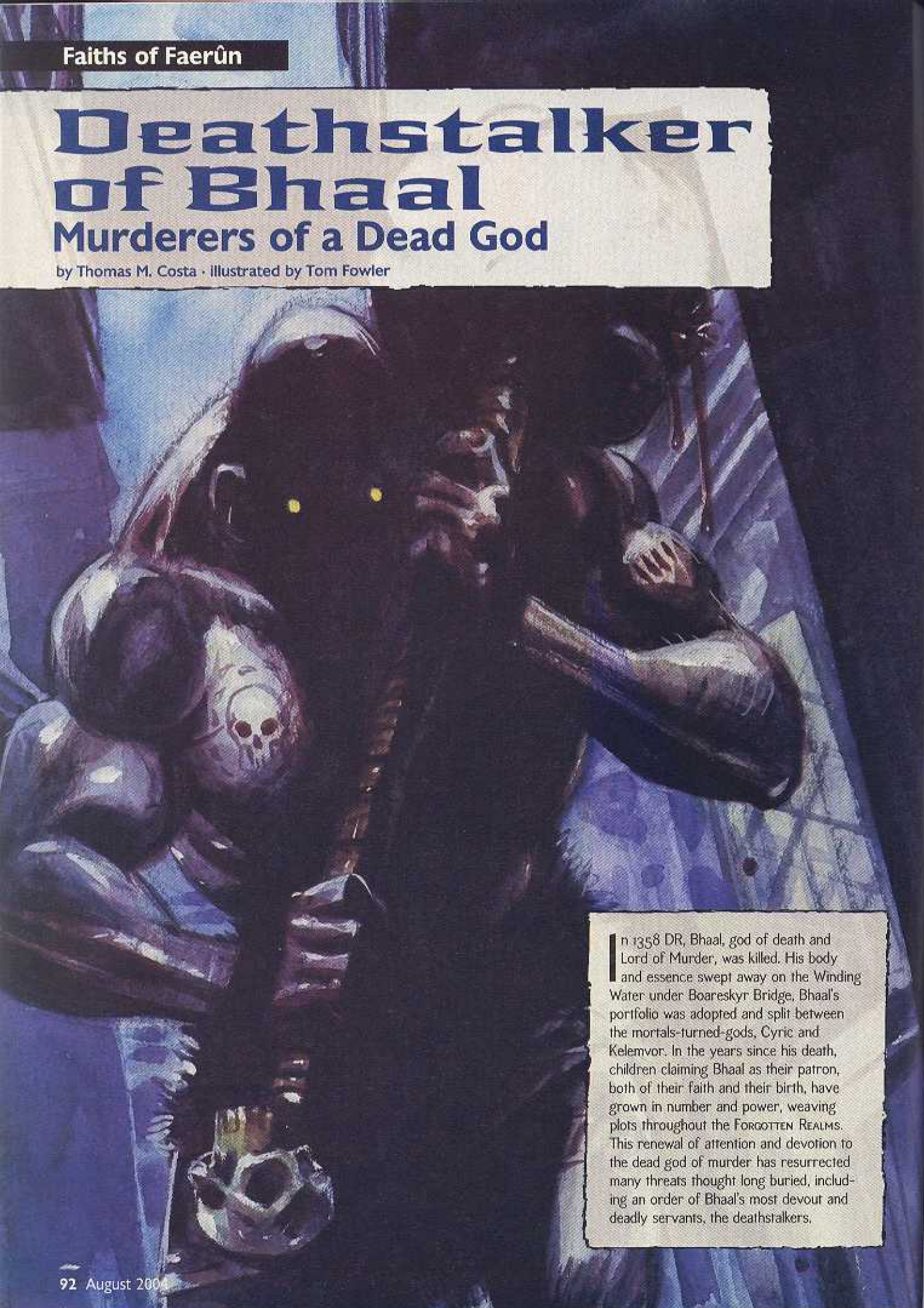
Level Adjustment: —.



Deathstalker of Bhaal

Murderers of a Dead God

by Thomas M. Costa · illustrated by Tom Fowler



In 1358 DR, Bhaal, god of death and Lord of Murder, was killed. His body and essence swept away on the Winding Water under Boareskyr Bridge, Bhaal's portfolio was adopted and split between the mortals-turned-gods, Cyric and Kelemvor. In the years since his death, children claiming Bhaal as their patron, both of their faith and their birth, have grown in number and power, weaving plots throughout the Forgotten Realms. This renewal of attention and devotion to the dead god of murder has resurrected many threats thought long buried, including an order of Bhaal's most devout and deadly servants, the deathstalkers.

DEATHSTALKERS OF BHAAL

Deathstalkers are the murderous servants of Bhaal, the Lord of Murder. Reduced to a scattered cult by their god's death and fervent persecution by worshippers of Cyric, this group of priest-assassins is making a name for itself and reestablishing small temples throughout Faerûn.

These zealous killers are dedicated to Bhaal and exhibit all of the powers they lost in the wake of the Godswar. However, it is unclear from where their power comes. Those few aware of the cult suspect the influence of Set encroaching on the portfolio of the mad Cyric, while others believe their powers to stem from Cyric himself. Still others point to recent troubles with the Bhaalspawn and the whispered resurrection of the one, true Bhaal. Whatever the origin of their abilities, the deathstalkers are a fearsome and dangerous lot.

Deathstalkers believe that every murder committed in his name strengthens Bhaal, bringing closer his unholy rebirth. As a result, they view murder as both a pastime and a duty. They are required to deal death once in every tenday in the heart of the night. If imprisonment or other constraining circumstances make this impossible, deathstalkers have to murder twice for each murder missed. In accordance with the Lord of Murder's teachings, deathstalkers strive to ensure that before they die, murder victims know who is killing them and that their death is in the name of Bhaal, intoning, "Bhaal awaits thee, Bhaal embraces thee, none escape Bhaal."

Nearly all deathstalkers are clerics, although many are multiclassed as rogues and a few are multiclassed as barbarians, fighters, rangers, or other classes.

Deathstalker Class Features

All the following are class features of the deathstalker of Bhaal.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Deathstalkers are proficient with all simple weapons and light and medium armor.

Spells per Day: Deathstalkers continue and increase their devotion to Bhaal. At each indicated deathstalker level, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a new level in a divine spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (increased turning abilities, animal companions and so on). This means he adds the deathstalker level to the level of some other spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. (If the character had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming a death stalker he must decide to which class he adds each level of deathstalker for purposes of spells per day).

Death Attack (Ex): Starting at 1st level, if the deathstalker studies his victim for 3 rounds and then makes a sneak attack with a melee weapon that successfully deals damage, the sneak attack has the additional effect of possibly either paralyzing or killing the target (deathstalker's choice). While studying the victim, the deathstalker can undertake other actions as long as his attention stays focused on the target and the target does not detect the deathstalker or recognize him as an enemy. If the victim of such an attack fails her Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + double the deathstalker's level + the deathstalker's Charisma modifier) against the kill effect, she dies. If the saving throw fails against the paralysis effect, the victim's mind and body become enervated, rendering her completely helpless and unable to act for 1d6 rounds plus 2 rounds per level of the deathstalker. If the victim's saving throw succeeds, the attack is just a normal sneak attack. Once the deathstalker has completed the 3 rounds of study, he must make the death attack within the next 3 rounds. If a death attack is attempted and fails (the victim makes her save) or if the deathstalker does not launch the attack within 3 rounds of completing the study, 3 new rounds of study are required before he can attempt another death attack.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Upon taking the 2nd level of this class, a character gains the ability to make sneak attacks as a rogue (see page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*). If the deathstalker gets a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as previous rogue levels), the bonuses to damage stack.

***Bloodlust* (Sp):** At 3rd level, once per day a deathstalker can evoke and direct the hatred of a living creature within 30 feet. The target of this abil-

DEATHSTALKER OF BHAAL ADVANCEMENT

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Death attack	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Sneak attack +1d6	–
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	*Bloodlust*	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Sneak attack +2d6	–
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Last breath of Bhaal	+1 level of existing class

DEATHSTALKER REQUIREMENTS

HIT DIE D8

To qualify to become a deathstalker of Bhaal, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Patron Deity: Bhaal.

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Skills: Hide 5 ranks, Move Silently 5 ranks, Survival 2 ranks.

Feats: Quick Draw.

Spells: Ability to cast 3rd-level divine spells. Clerics must have access to the Death or Destruction domain.

Special: Must have murdered at least sixteen sentient creatures, using sixteen different weapons or methods.

DEATHSTALKER CLASS SKILLS

The deathstalker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

BHAAL

Lord of Murder

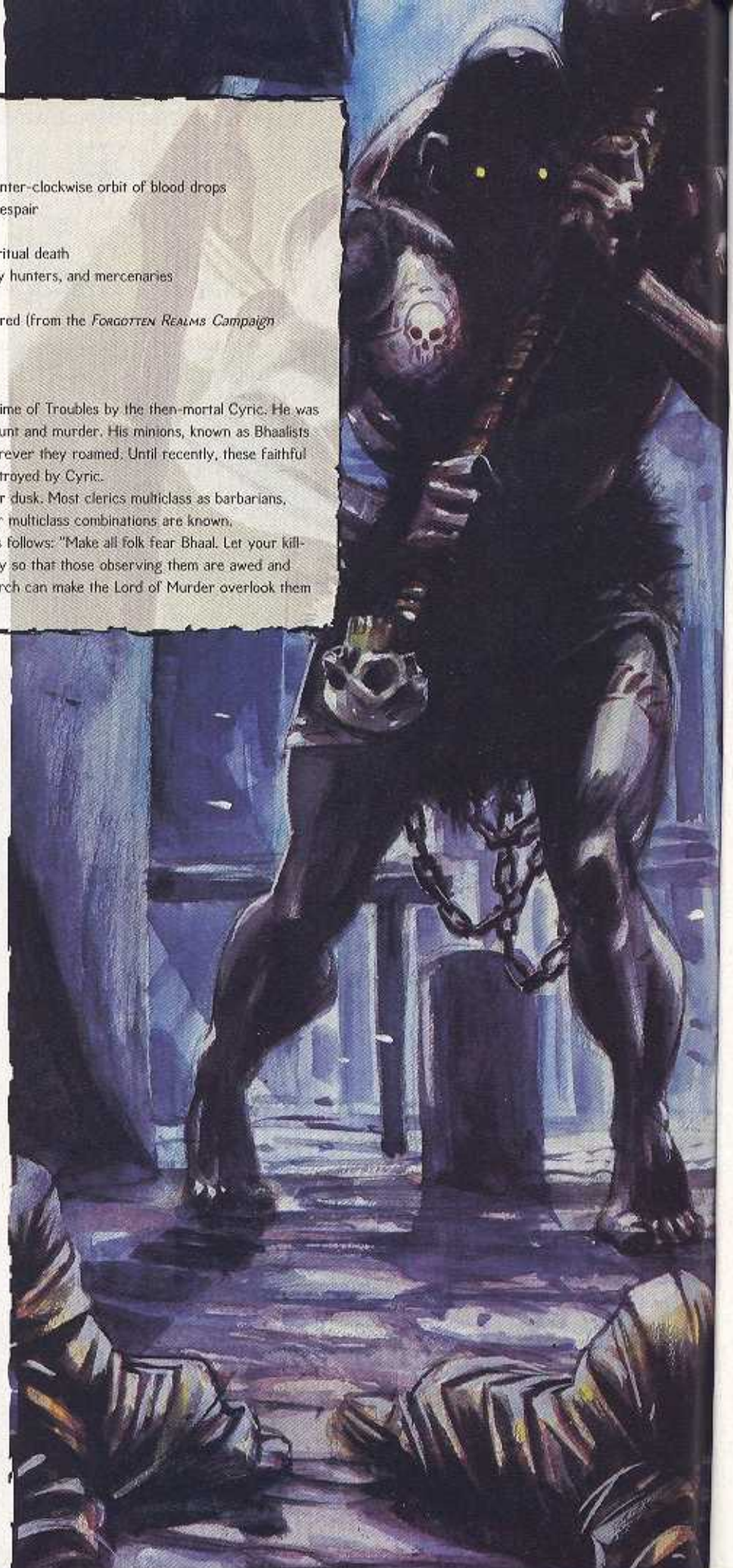
Intermediate Deity (Dead)

Symbol:	A skull surrounded by a counter-clockwise orbit of blood drops
Home Plane:	The Barrens of Doom and Despair
Alignment:	Lawful evil
Portfolio:	Death, especially violent or ritual death
Worshipers:	Murderers, assassins, bounty hunters, and mercenaries
Cleric Alignments:	LN, LE, NE
Domains:	Death, Destruction, Evil, Hatred (from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*), Law
Favored Weapon:	"Bone Blade" (dagger)

Bhaal was the god of murder, slain during the Time of Troubles by the then-mortal Cyric. He was violent, cruel, and hateful, and existed only to hunt and murder. His minions, known as Bhaalists or Bhaalyn, wrought devastation and death wherever they roamed. Until recently, these faithful were thought to have all been converted or destroyed by Cyric.

Clerics of Bhaal pray for their spells just after dusk. Most clerics multiclass as barbarians, fighters, rogues, or deathstalkers, although other multiclass combinations are known.

In the past, novices of Bhaal were charged as follows: "Make all folk fear Bhaal. Let your killings be especially elegant or grisly, or seem easy so that those observing them are awed and terrified. Tell folk that gold proffered to the church can make the Lord of Murder overlook them for today."



ity must succeed at a Will save (DC 16 + the deathstalker's Wisdom modifier) to resist this effect. Those that fail are affected as if by the spell *rage* (see page 268 of the *Player's Handbook*) and must attack another creature within 30 feet of them of the deathstalker's choosing. The affected creature will do all it can to kill the target of its hatred. This affect lasts for 1 round per deathstalker level. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Last Breath of Bhaal (Su): Deathstalkers who die after attaining 5th level are affected by the last breath of Bhaal. Said to contain the power residual in their dead god's last gasp, this ability causes a deathstalker slain in the service of Bhaal to be affected as if by the spell *raise dead,* as cast by a 12th-level cleric. This ability takes effect 1 hour after the deathstalker is killed, as long as the body has remained intact during that time. During that hour, the body shows no sign of life or that magic is affecting the corpse. As per *raise dead,* the deathstalker immediately loses 1 level.

Ex-Deathstalker: Like clerics, a deathstalker who grossly violates the dogma of Bhaal loses all spells and class features and cannot gain levels as a deathstalker until he atones (see the *atonement* spell description on page 201 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Dungeoncraft

CHARACTERIZATION, PART 3
THE SUM IS GREATER THAN ITS PARTS

by Monte Cook

Nothing ensures a fun campaign more than interesting and well-developed NPCs. So far, in parts one and two of this series on characterization, we've looked at creating simple but memorable nonplayer characters, primarily through assigning them distinctive physical and personality traits. There are other means of defining NPCs as well. Most of these involve using the context of the game—other NPCs, situations, or the PCs themselves.

TWO ARE MORE THAN ONE

Sometimes two separate individuals aren't as interesting as a linked pair of individuals. As a duo, each of the NPCs is not defined only by his own traits and mannerisms, but how he interacts with the other one. This can be defined by the interaction of two characters. Some relationships suggest obvious intersections: a master and an apprentice, a husband and a wife, two siblings, a parent and a child, a guardian and a charge, an admirer and the object of his affections, and an employer and an employee.

Some pairs are not defined by their relationship, but by other characteristics: a smart character and a stupid one (but the smarter one needs the other for some reason, such as a wizard and his bodyguard), a character who owes his life to another, a character who knows a secret and one who does not, a character who knows a secret the other wants to learn, and two characters competing for the same goal (but not as enemies).

Most of the time, since they are built as pairs, these NPCs are encountered together. If they stick around long enough in the campaign, the DM can use them individually, but the players will always think of them as one-half of a whole. That's something the DM can use to his advantage, further developing the NPC by the contrast of what he's like when he's with his "other half" and when he is not.

The inverse, however, can also be true. You can create two fully fleshed-out NPCs and introduce them to the players separately. If they are defined well enough, when they come together it should be no surprise to the players how they react to one another. If they know a foppish elf and a crude, aggressive half orc, the players aren't surprised that these two NPCs, put together, do not like each other at all. Of course, the DM can still throw the players a curve by having these two very different characters already know each other as old friends.

> The Eleventh Rule of Dungeoncraft: NPCs can be defined by how they interact with others as effectively as they can be defined as individuals.

An NPC defined in part by his feelings toward another NPC or a group of NPCs can interest players more than just the NPC by himself, such as a dwarf who hates the elf who killed his son. A halfling with fire giants as his best friends is even more remarkable. Strong emotions, either positive or negative, imply a story. When you suggest that there's a tale involved, the character suddenly has a past and seems even more like a real person.

NPCS DEFINED BY OTHERS

The PCs notice that no one goes near a mysterious-looking woman standing in the middle of a crowded marketplace. Everyone notices her, but they give her a wide berth. A few look startled to see her, as if she was the last person they expected to see in the marketplace, and they are none too happy about it. The bravest among them look more angry than fearful.

In this situation, the PCs already know a great deal about the woman without ever having spoken to her or spoken with anyone about her. She's someone who many people recognize and fear or distrust. She's not the kind of person who hangs around the marketplace—she's involved in something much more.

You can also use pre-existing NPCs to reinforce or create the characterization you want to develop for another NPC. Obviously, the easiest way is to have one NPC tell the PCs about the other NPC. Stories of the mad tyrant Velachor reach the PCs' ears long before they arrive in his tiny kingdom. The best way to define the NPC is to actually show the players how other NPCs react to him. When the PCs travel to Velachor's kingdom, they see the commoners cowering in their homes, afraid of the tyrant's men. In his court, his servants and vassals treat him carefully and obsequiously. They seem ready to take any mad proclamation with a smile.

> Whenever an NPC strikes an emotional chord with the players, whether positive or negative, the DM should allow the PCs' actions to mold the NPC to a degree.

INDIVIDUALS ARE A PART OF SOMETHING LARGER

Of course, characters come from the societies and races of which they are a part. No NPC is an island, so to speak. Think about our world. Even without getting into the realm of stereotypes, it's often true that people who come from the same geographic area speak similarly. It's sometimes true that people from large cities are less trusting than people from rural areas.

Apply this to your fantasy campaign. Perhaps all elves in your world speak very formally or they all have a certain drawl. The people who come from a certain large, bustling city are far more familiar with spells and magic items than the folk who live outside the city. All halflings hate being underground, while goblins are superstitious and extremely afraid of ghosts.

These traits can be based on standard fantasy clichés (dwarves hate orcs), they can be original (dwarves hate gnolls), or they can be reverse-clichés (dwarves enjoy the company of orcs). Whatever cultural traits you choose, players will learn these "rules" of your world and act on them.

When establishing your campaign, make heavy use of such rules or stereotypes. If elves are all bookish and fascinated by ancient lore, the players know where to go if they need information about historical fact. Not every elf is going to know something about ancient lore, but perhaps it makes more sense to go to the elves than to the halflings.

You can do this with likes and dislikes, mannerisms, and even things like mode of dress and favorite colors. Elves like blue and silver, unless they're forest elves, in which case they like green and gold. Both types like cloaks with hoods and wear many layers. Dwarves like brown and gray, cloaks without hoods, and simple dress made of thick materials like wool. The folk from the city-state of Navor wear hats with feathers and pointed boots. Details like these flesh out a group and help provide a baseline for each individual that is a part of the group.

BE AWARE OF CLICHÉS

Too much use of hackneyed clichés can ruin an otherwise great campaign, but you don't have to avoid them altogether. The trick is knowing when to use them and when not to use them—and the key there is to understand the usefulness of a stereotype.

For example, the PCs hear an NPC talking about a terrible barbarian warlord who's causing trouble in the next kingdom. With just two words, "barbarian warlord," they've got a picture in their minds: a hulking, hairy man, with a big axe, some crude hide armor, maybe some scars, and probably surrounded by a horde of screaming berserkers faithfully following his every command. This kind of shorthand can be very handy.

Now, with this image placed in their imaginations, you can do one of two things as a DM. You can rely on the cliché as a tool to help them understand, or you can play against this expectation and present the terrible barbarian warlord as something very different from the stereotype. When the PCs enter the warlord's pavilion, they might find a female barbarian, a wizard, or a well-groomed and well-mannered chieftain. Indeed, the warlord might be all three. It could even be a tentacled aberration from beyond time and space. Any of these breaks the obvious cliché and keeps the players on their toes. As something fresh and new, it keeps them from assuming

they understand everything (which in turn encourages them to explore and investigate your world, which is a good thing).

Breaking the stereotype every time, however, is dangerous. Stereotypes exist in the real world because human nature tends to lump people into groups with common traits. If the campaign world never has common traits, or everyone clearly bucks the stereotype, then no stereotype exists. For example, if every dwarf in the campaign sidesteps the stereotype of the gruff warrior who loves earth and stone, then this quickly stops being the stereotype.

If everyone the PCs talk to seems to believe that goblins are stupid, but the PCs only encounter very smart goblins, the players might either begin to lose their suspension of disbelief or they will start to believe something strange is going on.

The inverse is true as well. If you want to stress that people in your campaign world don't make social distinctions based on gender but every leader and powerful character the PCs encounter is male, the players aren't going to buy it.

GRACE UNDER PRESSURE—OR NOT

It's interesting to insert an NPC into the campaign and see how the PCs react to him or her, roleplaying with the DM back and forth, learning some of the NPC's mannerisms and traits through conversation. Just as informative for observant players is how the NPC acts and reacts in various situations in the game. Nothing is more fun, for example, than to set up expectations about the prowess and bravery of an NPC as he speaks with the PCs (or as others speak about him), only to show them a very different face once he meets with a real threat. As the dragon lays him low or sends him scurrying off, the PCs learn not to take everything at face value.

A situational context doesn't always have to be a battle, either. The mighty wizard who suddenly expresses a fear of heights becomes more interesting (if a little less impressive). The paladin who ignores the starving children in the street as she rides by reveals a chink in her righteous armor. Meanwhile, the greedy rogue who takes the time to buy them some food shows a deeper personality more complex than the clichéd façade.

NPCS DEFINED BY THE PCS

The DM introduces a halfling NPC into the game who sells scrolls. He speaks very fast and with great enthusiasm for his wares. The players take to him immediately, laughing at what he says and extending the encounter with him far more than normally necessary to just buy a couple of *scrolls of cure moderate wounds*. Clearly, this NPC should return to center stage, so to speak, sometime in the future. A good DM never lets cues from the players like these get past him. Something about the NPC struck a chord, and the players will almost certainly enjoy seeing him again.

> When the PCs enter the warlord's pavilion, they might find a female barbarian, a wizard, or a well-groomed and well-mannered chieftain.

Whenever an NPC strikes an emotional chord with the players, whether positive or negative, the DM should allow the PCs' actions to mold the NPC to a degree. A villain they hate might decide to take a special interest in them. A townsperson they like decides to come to them when in need. In other words, the NPC reacts to the PCs' obvious impressions of him, and the DM reacts to the players' obvious impressions as well.

You could also try to introduce an NPC a PC knew before the game ever started. These "background" NPCs might be a part of the history the player established for the PC, or they might be wholly your creation. An NPC rival of the instructor the PC had in his background shows up at the PC's doorstep. The DM tells the player that the PC recognizes the NPC, and tells him how she fits into her past. Now the player instantly gets an idea of how to react to the NPC—with wary distrust, perhaps, or outright hostility. In this way, the DM uses the PC's background to give an NPC characteristics that immediately evoke a response.

CHARACTERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

NPCs grow and change. The longer they stay in the limelight of the campaign, the more they need to rise above the couple of traits you've given them and flesh themselves out more like living, breathing people. Players find it rewarding to win over the local magistrate who did not trust them. Perhaps over the course of the campaign, the magistrate actually becomes a close ally.

Like the characters in any work of fiction can make or break a story, NPCs can make or break a campaign. Even though they are the main characters in their story, the PCs have no setting or plot without other characters for them to interact with. Without allies, villains, and everyone in between, even the most wonderfully crafted and imaginative setting becomes just an empty stage.

DM's Toolbox

READING BETWEEN THE LINES FINDING OUT WHAT'S FUN FOR PLAYERS

by Marc Tassin

A good DM possesses the ability to improvise details on the fly. A great DM can come up with details that not only fill out the scene but also make the game more fun for the players. It's a fine distinction, but one that can make a significant difference in a game.

What difference exists between details that simply describe the scene and details that actually add to the enjoyment of the game? Let's look at an example: A player asks about the lighting in a ballroom, and the DM, noting nothing in the room's description about the ballroom's lighting, thinks fast and says that torches line the walls.

Although an acceptable answer, the DM didn't really know why the player asked about lighting. Maybe the player wanted to make a dramatic entrance by swinging across the room on a chandelier. This would have created a great scene and made the game more fun for the player (and probably the DM). Unfortunately, the details the DM gave don't facilitate this, and the game lost an opportunity to having something fun added to it.

A DM faces the challenge of figuring out what the players really want and then making changes without the players knowing how their actions led to the changes. If the players figure out that the DM has altered the adventure based on their input, they might feel like the DM has handed the adventure to them. Even worse, if the changes make the encounter more challenging for the players, they might feel like the DM is working against them.

Fortunately, you can improvise details and events in a subtle manner, while still making the game more fun than running it strictly as written. Some of this involves making accurate interpretations of what the players look for in the adventure. The other half of the process involves making the changes in such a way that they don't derail the adventure's story.

READING THE SIGNS

First, you must figure out what makes a particular situation more fun for the players. Unfortunately, players often don't say what would make an encounter more fun for them. This means that in order to get to the heart of their motivation, you need to read between the lines of the comments and choices the players make during the course of an adventure.

Players often give all sorts of signals about what they enjoy in a game. An observant DM can pick up these signals, whether obvious or not, and put them to good use.

The player often probes for additional details after you finish a description. This player probably likes puzzles and problem solving. When faced with a challenge, she comes up with a plan and then looks for the tools to implement it. Giving this player what she needs to put her plans into action makes the game more enjoyable for her since she won't feel that only a limited number of "correct" answers to a challenge exist. By working with her creativity, you reward her involvement and encourage the same behavior in the future.

The player always formulates a detailed battle plan before combat. This player really enjoys the challenge of tactical combat. He looks for advantages, analyzing the enemy, and he enjoys the process of setting up and executing a battle plan. Although not every

battle needs or warrants this level of involvement, working with this player on some combat encounters enhances the game experience for him.

Details such as the precise range of enemy units, placement of potential cover, and other relevant combat information makes the game more fun for this player. In addition, if the enemy has an equally detailed battle plan, the player sees it as a true challenge of his skills, enhancing the experience even more.

The player designs her character as a haughty elf who hates goblins due to a past tragedy. This player probably enjoys the story aspect of the game most of all. Details such as an NPC with a similar background with whom she can discuss her past, goblins that personify the traits her character hates about them, or telling her that the current adventure bring back memories of her tragedy feed her imagination. This sort of co-storytelling adds a great deal to the game for her.

These examples show only a few of the hints players might give you about what they consider fun. Watching for these hints can be a great start and gives you a lot to work with. However, to really do the job right, you need a little more information.

GATHER INFORMATION

No better way exists to find out what your players enjoy than by asking questions. If you don't, you might end up making an incorrect assumption. Not only does an error of interpretation fail to achieve the goal of making the game more fun for the players, it might have the opposite effect.

> The DM faces the challenge of figuring out what the players really want.

For instance, look at the first of the previous examples. While it's safe to say the interpretation given probably correctly gauges the player's intentions, the possibility exists that something else could motivate her to ask so many questions. Perhaps her character, a rogue, wants to "case the joint" for valuables. Without asking questions, the DM can't know for sure.

How the DM poses the questions proves the key to getting good information from the players. You don't want to just come out and ask, "So what should I change to make this scene more fun?" This disrupts the illusion of the characters struggling against objective forces in a real world.

Instead, you want to get the player to tell you more about their thoughts and intentions. Make sure your players can't answer your questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Questions of this type seldom yield useful information.

To illustrate this, the examples below show two ways you could probe for more information in the same situation.

The Wrong Way: "Are you looking for valuables?" In this case, the player might answer with a quick "yes" or "no," leaving you where you started. If you want to get information that lets you make the game more fun for the players, you need to ask the question a little differently.

The Right Way: "What kind of things are you looking for?" This sort of question gets to the core of the matter. With a question like this, the player can explain her purpose for asking for more information. If she wants wealth, she likely says something like, "I'm looking for anything I can sell when we get back to town." On the other hand, if she needs tools to implement a plan, she probably says something like, "I'm looking for a rope that we can use to cross the chasm." With answers like these, you have the information you need to craft a reply that rewards the player for her creativity and makes the game more fun for her.

MAKING THE CHANGE

Once you know what the players really want, you can tweak the adventure to better suit their interests. You must face the challenge that most adventures, especially published adventures, cannot possibly predict a particular set of player motivations. This means that in order to make use of the knowledge you have gathered, you need to improvise.

Some minor adjustments consist of little more than adding the right bit of description to a scene. Other more significant adjustments require such drastic changes as altering the entire focus of an encounter. Remember that while some solid "truths" in an adventure need to remain in place, sometimes you must change things to fit in with what your players find entertaining, rather than to stick rigidly to what the adventure says.

An infinite number of ways to do this exist, but a few techniques work especially well. Each allows the modification of encounters without requiring a complete overhaul of the adventure. The resulting game subtly focuses on the things the players enjoy, rather than the adventure designer's definition of fun.

FILL IN THE BLANK

It's impossible to describe every aspect of every encounter in an adventure. Yet, like any good story, most adventures offer enough information to shape the scenes, and the players fill in the rest with their imaginations. You need to remember this because when a player asks a question about a place, encounter, or other aspect of the adventure, he probably has his own idea of what he wants for an answer.

Knowing—or at least suspecting—what the players have imagined proves invaluable to creating a game they enjoy. When a player asks about something, a response like, "Why do you ask?" or "What does your character think?" helps you to reach the heart of the

matter. Most of the time, a question like this inspires an answer with all the information you need, along with a lot of good ideas you might not have thought of on your own.

Once you know what the player expected when he asked the question, you can make a good decision about how to respond. In some cases, you can simply reply with "As a matter of fact, you're right." This gives the player a sense of accomplishment and competence. It also encourages the kind of involvement in the game that led to the question in the first place.

On the other hand, knowing what the players expect gives you the option of presenting something other than what the players hoped. Players who find the opposite of what they expected find a clear and exciting challenge for their characters to overcome. Players who overcome such a challenge feel even more rewarded, since they succeeded in the face of the opposite of what they hoped for!

Offering something similar to what the player hoped for, but not exactly, also works. For instance, a player asks about a room's contents, to which you reply "Why do you ask?" The player goes on to explain that he wants a rope to cross the chasm.

This player's question actually tells you that the challenge of getting across the chasm interests him. Instead of just giving the player a rope, however, an answer that plays off his desire to come up with a plan can create an even more enjoyable encounter.

For instance, you might respond, "No, there isn't a rope, but there's a crate of old sackcloth rags, a pulley, and a barrel filled with long metal rods." The process of brainstorming how this odd collection of items could get the party across the chasm makes for a great challenge. More importantly, the player can feel far more satisfied with the final success than if you had just given him a rope.

EXPANDING THE ENCOUNTER

Sometimes the players in your group discover exactly the sort of encounters in an adventure that they enjoy. Unfortunately, if the person who wrote the adventure doesn't enjoy this type of encounter, it might only appear as little more than a minor side event between major scenes. If this happens, don't hesitate to expand the encounter into something more important. The players come to your game to have a good time, and if they like a particular encounter, you don't have to relegate it to obscurity just because the printed version of the adventure does.

This sort of change involves more improvisation than merely filling in the blanks. You might need to add characters, expand the personalities of minor NPCs, or quickly map areas not considered important by the adventure's creator. At the same time, you don't want your changes to make it obvious that this section once held less importance in the adventure, so the smoother the improvisation, the better.

In order to make this sort of change work, you need to make sure you have extensively prepared for the prospect of running such improvisation. While always true when running a game, this rule becomes especially pertinent when doing a major improvisation. Having stats for various types of NPCs on hand, a stack of maps for common locations, and similar tools and tables makes a change like this far easier than if you have to come up with an encounter expansion off the cuff.

> You can emphasize details and events in a subtle manner.

AIDING THE DM

Most DMs want to work with their players to make the game fun. The more they know, the better they can do their job. When asking questions, make sure to explain the reason behind your question. This gives the DM something to work with when crafting a response for you.

Also, talk to the DM ahead of time about what sort of things you like to do in the game. If you like detailed battles more than roleplaying, let her know. You won't get what you want every time, but a little advance notice helps the DM know where to focus her energy.

CHANGE THE FOCUS

This technique, while the most complex, does the most to shape an encounter into the type of scene your players enjoy. Occasionally, when you present an encounter, the players' idea of a fun way to

TIPS FOR IMPROVISING

A few basic tips and tricks, such as the ones described here, can make improvisation easier.

Take Five: Don't hesitate to take a minute to collect your thoughts before a big change. The old excuse, "I just want to check something first" works and can buy you time to get the tools you need. The players understand, and you run a better encounter because of the extra preparation.

Pretend to Look It Up: It's best if you can make changes so the players don't realize it. You can fool them by pretending to look something up in the adventure text before responding with your improvisation.

Make Them Work For It: Just because you make a change that fits with what the players enjoy doesn't mean the change has to make things easy. Sure, maybe the room contains the rope the players need, but maybe it holds the door shut on a cage full of stirges!

resolve it runs counter to what the adventure expects. When this happens, plowing forward with the encounter as written can undermine the players' enjoyment and leave them feeling as though their ideas don't really impact the game.

For instance, the adventure might have an encounter presented as a complex battle with a band of lizardfolk. As you finish laying out the introduction to the encounter, one player has his character frantically try to figure out how to say, "We come in peace" in Draconic, while another says his character digs through his pack for potential trade goods. This behavior makes it clear the players prefer to resolve the encounter through a spirited round of roleplaying, not a complicated battle.

At this point, if you ignore their actions and simply have everyone roll for initiative, you force a type of encounter on the players in which they've shown less interest. Worst of all, whenever the players meet a challenge, they become less likely to get involved in coming up with their own way to address it. Instead, they might simply wait to see what the adventure tells them to do, since previous experience taught them their ideas don't have an impact.

A situation like this warrants a change of focus. In this case, you might choose to change it from a combat encounter to a roleplaying encounter. This might not make the scene any less challenging or dangerous. Trying to barter with a band of lizardfolk, for example, might not be a safe course of action, and one wrong comment or an accidental insult could end in violence. By changing the focus, your willingness to work with the players rewards their initiative.

A final important note on changing focus: Keep in mind the purpose of the encounter in the overall context of the adventure. If the adventure intends the party to take a vital artifact from the corpse of the lizardfolk leader, you need to make sure that the same artifact becomes available in some other way during the changed encounter. Otherwise, the change could cause problems down the line.

These techniques provide just a few examples you can employ to make an adventure more fun for the players. Naturally, it's always good for the players to face encounters not ideal for them, since this helps create a challenging game. Knowing what sort of situations and challenges the players enjoy and making subtle changes to support that enjoyment makes the experience more fun for everyone, and leads to a great game.

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Sage Advice

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

ACTIVATING ITEMS, FALLING DOWN, AND TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING

by Skip Williams

This month, the Sage considers questions about ability scores, feats, magic items, and being prone. You can email the Sage with your questions at sageadvice@paizo.com.

I'd like to know just how intelligent a human character with an Intelligence score of 3 is. What is the character's approximate IQ? Is the character considered mentally handicapped or just slow? Can he carry a normal conversation, or does he have problems speaking?

A character with an Intelligence score of 3 is smarter that most animals, but only barely. Any creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher can understand at least one language (see page 7 in the *Monster Manual*). A human with an Intelligence score of 3 can speak Common but does not have a good vocabulary (perhaps a few hundred one- and two-syllable words), and the character doesn't have a good grasp of syntax and grammar. The character speaks and understands only simple subject-verb sentences and probably has problems with things such as past and future tense.

Intelligence also affects memory and reasoning, so the example character doesn't have much of a head for facts, nor will the character be very good at arithmetic.

Ten points of IQ per point of Intelligence is a good rule of thumb, so your example character has an IQ of about 30. How the example character is perceived and treated depends on social conditions in the campaign. Most cultures in a D&D world are pretty tolerant—they have to be just so they can get along in a place that contains the wide variety of creatures that inhabit most D&D worlds. In such cultures, terms such as "dull" and "slow" probably don't get much use, at least in respect to a person's mental capacity. When your own Intelligence is about average (10) you're "slow" compared to a dragon, beholder, mind flayer, or other creature that might live right next door or lurk beyond the next valley. Still, elitism and a sense of superiority can exist just about anywhere.

It is a good bet, however, that the example characters' associates, relatives, and neighbors know the character's mental limitations, and that they adjust their expectations for that character accordingly.

Does a *cloak of Charisma*, an *eagle's splendor* spell, or other Charisma enhancements increase the saving throw bonus from a paladin's divine grace class feature?

Yes. Use the paladin's current Charisma modifier, whatever it might be. Temporary Charisma increases also increase the saving throw bonus from divine grace. On the other hand, temporary Charisma decreases reduce the saving throw bonus from divine grace as well.

How long does it take to activate a scroll with an *identify* spell on it? How about a scroll with any of the *summon monster* spells or a *wand of summon monster?* This has been a serious debate for some of us. Page 213 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, under Using Magic Items, says "Activating a magic item is a standard action unless the item description indicates otherwise. However, the casting time of a spell is the time required to activate the same power in an item, whether it's a scroll, a wand, or a pair of boots, unless the item description specifically states otherwise." Yet, the very next section (spell completion items) states: "This is the activation method for scrolls. . . . Activating a spell completion item is a standard action and provokes attacks of opportunity exactly as casting a spell does." The *Player's Handbook* section on scrolls also says it's a standard action, yet the *Dungeon Master's Guide* spell storing weapon ability on page 225 says "This special

Borders illustrated by David Wahlstrom

ability is an exception to the general rule that casting a spell from an item takes at least as long as casting that spell normally." Which set of rules is correct?

Activating any magic item is a standard action, unless the item duplicates a spell effect that has a longer casting time or unless the item description specifies a different casting time. The sections on spell completion and spell trigger items should include the caveat that activating the item takes as long as casting the stored spell would take. Thus, it takes 1 hour to activate a scroll with an *identify* spell on it. A scroll or a wand with any of the *summon monster* spells in it takes a full round to activate, just as casting a *summon monster* spell does.

A command word item takes a standard action to activate, no matter what the casting time of the spell it duplicates. In general, command word items don't duplicate spells with long casting times.

Use-activated items typically don't have any activation times (because they function continually or because you activate them automatically as part of the action you take to use the item). Like command word items, use-activated items usually don't duplicate spells with long casting times. Activating a scroll (or any other spell completion item) is "like casting a spell for purposes of arcane spell failure (such as from armor)" (see "Activation" on page 238 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). An armored rogue who activates a scroll with Use Magic Device suffers the normal arcane spell failure chance.

I'm trying to find out if my rogue, wearing leather armor, can make a Use Magic Device check to trigger a wand containing an arcane spell. What is the DC for doing so? It appears from the rules that the armor will cause a 10% chance of arcane spell failure if the spell being cast has a somatic (S) component (*Player's Handbook* page 122). Is it true that casting a spell from a spell-trigger item, such as a wand, removes the requirement for the somatic component, and thereby eliminates this 10% chance of failure?

The Use Magic Device skill is for using magic items that you normally could not otherwise activate. Activating a wand has a DC of 20, as shown on the table in the Use Magic Device skill description. However, this assumes that you already know what spell the wand stores. If you don't, you have to activate the wand blindly (DC 25). If you successfully activate a wand blindly, you know what spell it contains, and your subsequent attempts to activate that particular wand are at DC 20.

There's no arcane spell failure chance for activating a spell trigger item, for a command word item, or for a use-activated item. There is an arcane spell failure chance for activating a scroll (a spell completion item), provided the spell stored on the scroll has a somatic component.

Given that being prone means you are lying on the ground (*Player's Handbook* page 311), who can be prone? Can oozes be prone? What about creatures with no limbs like snakes? What about incorporeal creatures?

Anybody can be "prone." Creatures that use limbs for locomotion can use a free action to drop prone and must use a move action to stand up again. Something with no motive limbs, such as a snake, can go prone or "stand up" as a free action. Such creatures might want to become prone to gain an Armor Class bonus against ranged attacks. (Although giving something like a gelatinous cube that option defies common sense and should not be allowed.) Officially, there's an attack of opportunity anytime a creature stands up. The Sage, however, heartily recommends no attack of opportunity when a snake or similar creature "stands up."

Being tripped makes you prone. Who can be tripped? Beholders? Gelatinous cubes? What effect does tripping have on these creatures? Can a prone character be tripped again? What about flying and swimming creatures? Many creatures have neither legs nor any relationship to the ground or gravity. How does tripping affect them?

Anything using limbs for locomotion can be tripped. Things that don't need limbs for locomotion can't be tripped. You can't trip a snake, a beholder, or a gelatinous cube. You won't find this in the rules, but then it really doesn't need to be in there—the rules can leave some things to the DM's common sense.

A creature flying with wings can be "tripped," in which case the creature stalls (see Tactical Aerial Movement on page 20 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). You can't make an incorporeal creature fall down. You also can't trip a prone creature.

Creatures can't be tripped when they're swimming (the water holds them up). Likewise, a burrowing creature is driving its body through a fairly solid medium that serves to hold it up.

When a character gets up from prone, when does the attack of opportunity take place? When he is still prone? When he is standing? Can the attacker choose when to attack? In one case, the attacker can get a +4 bonus to hit. In the other, he can make another trip attack.

All attacks of opportunity happen before the actions that trigger them (see Chapter 8 in the *Player's Handbook*). When you make an attack of opportunity against someone who's getting up, your target is effectively prone, and therefore cannot be tripped. You could ready an action to trip a prone foe after he gets up, however.

Can prone characters move? The rules on crawling would obviously apply here, but this question also includes things like limbless creatures and oozes. Can

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a creature tumble while prone? Can he tumble to get out of the threatened area? How fast would he move? You can tumble as part of normal movement. What is a "normal move" anyway?

If a creature has no motive limbs, it moves at its normal speed when prone, otherwise it must crawl or tumble. There's no game definition of the term "normal move" but the rules use it as shorthand for using a move action to travel up to your speed (as opposed to using a skill such as Climb or Swim). Crawling isn't "normal movement," but tumbling is the art of moving with acrobatic skill, and there's no reason why a prone tumbler couldn't artfully roll away from a foe.

When fighting with two weapons, does the Combat Expertise feat apply to both weapons individually or together? For example, do I take a -2 on attack rolls for both weapons to add +2 Armor Class? Or do I take -2 on attack rolls for both weapons for a +4 bonus to Armor Class?

You get the AC bonus once. The attack penalty applies to all attacks you make until your next turn. If you use two weapons to make extra attacks, the penalty applies to the attacks from both weapons. It also applies to any attacks of opportunity you make before your next turn.

Normally, you have to use a light weapon to benefit from the Weapon Finesse feat. You can also use a rapier or a spiked chain with Weapon Finesse. You cannot use the Power Attack feat with a light weapon. Can you use a spiked chain or a rapier and benefit from both Weapon Finesse and Power Attack at the same time?

Yes. A rapier or a spiked chain made for a creature of your size is not a light weapon, even when you're using the weapon with the Weapon Finesse feat. If you have both feats and use a rapier or a spiked chain, you can manage power and finesse in the same attack. Note that you must take both penalties to gain the benefits of both feats. For instance, if you decide to take a -1 penalty on attack rolls, you can use Weapon Finesse or Power Attack. Whereas if you take a -2 penalty on attack rolls, you can add +1 to your AC and +1 on your damage rolls, or you can add +2 to your AC or your damage.

Just how fast can a dwarf barbarian, or other race with a speed of 20, move in medium armor? There are two prevailing opinions on this: 25 feet (10 feet more than that of a typical dwarf in medium armor) or 20 feet (the result of consulting table 7–6 for a creature with a speed of 30 feet).

Table 7–6 uses base speeds, not races. Always apply any speed increases a character has before applying the effects of armor (see page 147 in the *Player's Handbook*). A halfling or gnome barbarian in medium armor has a speed of 20 feet. A dwarf barbarian in medium armor has a speed of 30 feet because medium or heavy armor doesn't reduce a dwarf's speed (see page 14 in the *Player's Handbook*).